

A close-up photograph of a Miller Industries truck, showing the front grille, headlights, and the side of the trailer with multiple wheels. The truck is white with black accents.

infor

CASE STUDY

# Miller Industries hauls out siloed data with Infor Birst

Miller Industries, Inc. (“Miller Industries”) is the world leader in towing and recovery equipment. Founded in 1990, this Tennessee-based company provides innovative, high-quality towing and recovery equipment worldwide. Exporting to countries around the world, Miller Industries operates from a total of four manufacturing facilities in the United States, one in the United Kingdom, and one in France. Each manufacturing plant specializes in certain products or brands integrating back-end products with equipment-specific chassis. Miller Industries markets products under the brands: Century®, Holmes®, Chevron®, Vulcan®, Boniface®, and Jige®. As an industry leader, Miller Industries produces a comprehensive line of quality equipment, including carriers up to 30 feet in length, with deck capabilities of up to 40,000 lb. and towing recovery units with boom capacities of 100 tons. Miller Industries products are sold and serviced through the largest distribution network in the industry. For more information, visit [millerind.com](http://millerind.com).

Before deploying networked business intelligence (BI) from Infor® Birst, the information needed to manage finance, sales, and manufacturing processes was locked in multiple systems and only accessible to technical experts.

“ Every morning, we have the latest information available, and it’s consistent and accurate for all users from the CEO down, designed to allow information to be viewed as it relates to their area of responsibility. With Infor Birst, we can access and analyze a long history of information for answers we need for any business question in an instant, through any device.”

**WILLIAM G. MILLER II**  
President, and Co-CEO, Miller Industries



#### Headquarters

Ooltewah, Tennessee, U.S.

#### Revenue

\$712 million US

#### Industry

Industrial Equipment  
Manufacturing

#### Employees

1,240

#### Infor product

Infor Birst®, Infor CloudSuite™  
Automotive, Infor LN, Infor  
d/EPM, Infor CloudSuite  
Workforce Management (WFM),  
Infor CloudSuite HCM, Infor OS®  
(Operating Service), CloudSuite  
Configure Price Quote, Infor  
Factory Track®, CloudSuite  
Expense Management

Decentralized analytics teams pulled data directly from source systems, generating islands of information that could not be shared. Further, executive-level reporting was manual, and it was very time-consuming to not only access information but also to reconcile inconsistent metrics. These manual processes greatly increased the time it took Miller Industries to make decisions and were a huge drain on the productivity of the management teams.

## Breaking down the silos

An Infor customer since 1998, Miller Industries is currently using Infor LN enterprise resource planning (ERP) system and is moving to Infor's CloudSuite™ Automotive and other cloud-based applications (planned Q1 2020). The company decided to implement Infor Birst as its enterprise-wide BI and analytics standard after learning about this next-generation cloud BI platform which integrates with a wide variety of data sources including Infor LN and is the analytics standard for all of Infor's CloudSuites. The goal was to gain more knowledge from a single source of data, as well as mobile access to that data, and more visibility to that information so management could improve and accelerate decision-making yet still tend to day-to-day business operations. The Birst platform provides all levels of the organization the power to analyze the latest trends, understand what's driving the business, and to make quick and informed decisions.

## Agile development

Due to taking an agile development approach and value-based design methodology, Miller Industries' first dashboards were live within three months. The finance and information technology

**“ Before using Infor Birst, it was difficult to make business decisions quickly because we had to extract the information manually. Once we had found the information, employees would have to download and analyze reports. Investing in Birst gives us the most flexible and reliable solution for every business problem we have.”**

**WILLIAM G. MILLER II**  
President, and Co-CEO, Miller Industries

## Business results and efficiencies

**80%**

reduction in the time to create revenue budgets

**80%**

reduction in reporting requests and business questions processed manually

**40%**

reduction in past-due accounts receivable balances

**100s**

of spreadsheets replaced by a few dashboards

**4**

dashboards deployed in only 3 months

departments conducted meetings with individual department managers to determine the most critical data elements required to monitor activity and results. The results of the discovery sessions were analyzed and combined to create dashboards featuring the most critical information as the initial phases of implementation began.

Phase (or sprint) one consisted of three dashboards to monitor monthly revenue, accounts receivable balances, and open purchase orders. Phase two included four additional dashboards to monitor inventory levels, wage and salary expense, gross margins, and sales order activity. Additional dashboards subsequently created added in financing activity, customer profile details, and historical sales by product type. The development team then returned to dashboards launched during the first two phases to fill in extra levels of detail and functionality. Most importantly, these first dashboards met all the deadlines with targeted functionality and deliverables set by the Miller Industries executive team.

## A single version of the truth

Miller Industries took an intriguing approach to the deployment of analytics across the organization. Early in the development process, they decided that everybody should have access to the same information and the same dashboards. William G. Miller II, President, and Co-CEO of Miller Industries took a central role in dashboard development, reviewing and critiquing each iteration to ensure that the dashboards would meet the needs of his team.

And consequently, the entire management team now relies on those same dashboards. Infor Birst's powerful security model and dynamic filters ensure that staff only sees authorized information that's relevant to their role. Information is filtered and secured by operating entity, customer and customer type, product type, sales representative, and department.

The benefit of this top-down approach to analytics is that everybody across the management hierarchy is viewing the exact same information as the executive team and everybody is aligned to the executive team's key performance indicators (KPIs), eliminating insight silos and barriers to alignment within the enterprise.

## Improved planning, decision making, and customer relationships

Now that real-time business information is easily available to the entire management, it has freed up a significant chunk of time for management to work on value-added projects, allowing them to move the business forward without any administrative headcount additions.

The dashboard filters allow users to target specific areas of interest and focus on exceptions rather than losing time extracting and formatting data to access those details. Miller Industries has also rolled out the Infor Birst dashboards via Birst Mobile on phones and tablets, so information is available anywhere the manager happens to be.

**“ The Infor Birst implementation was incredibly fast and slick. It was easy to learn, and we got results very quickly.”**

**SIAS REYNEKE**  
CIO, Miller Industries

Miller Industries also began using Birst to support the annual planning process. The management team looks to historical sales information to analyze sales information by customer, product type, and period. The company can now rapidly generate a future sales forecast using relevant and detailed information. Being able to quickly understand and segment historical sales reduced the time it takes to forecast revenue by 80% over previous years—before Miller Industries used Birst.

In addition, Birst has reduced time-consuming and manual information requests by approximately 80%. Information that was once only available with advanced knowledge of the data structures can now be easily accessed directly by management. With easier access to the right information and better visibility of past-due accounts receivable balances by customer and decreasing the time needed to make this information available to management, past-due accounts receivable balances have been reduced by approximately 40%.

Customer analytics is a key use case for Miller Industries. “So now, for example, we have a dashboard for customers,” says Sias Reyneke, CIO at Miller Industries. “When sales meets with a customer either face-to-face or on the phone, they have all the key data for that customer on their dashboard. They can see what open orders they have, what type of products are on order, what products are ready for pickup, and what products have been invoiced.” The sales department has instant access to customer history going back ten years to help support better decision making. “All of the information sales needs to work with a customer is at their fingertips. In the past, that kind of information access was not possible because the data resided in different departments and different systems. These questions generated at a customer meeting required somebody to go and manually run a report” continued Reyneke.

Additional use cases implemented with the first wave of dashboards in Birst include:

- Accounts receivable
- Sales invoicing
- Purchasing order information
- Inventory by category and facility
- Sales order history by product over the last ten years
- Cost of sales to better understand the profitability of each product
- Financing information
- Labor information including how many hours are available every week and how is that time spent in the factory and on what products

All of the use cases above have been developed so that the CEO and the senior executives can monitor the company-wide performance and then drill down to see specific details around plants, regions, and products. Each plant manager can see the labor analytics relative to their plant, and sales, who are organized by region, can see regional sales data. Everyone at Miller Industries shares the same dashboard, but the content is filtered to be 100% relevant to the area of each person's responsibility.

Miller Industries is also currently working with the principal owners of Miller Industries Distributors to test information sharing via Birst dashboards and plans to roll these solutions out to up to 100 distributors over time. Distributors will be able to see sales history providing insights into what products are selling in their region, how much they sold historically, and how much they have on order. As a result, distributors will be able to make far more informed decisions about future sales orders than ever before. Another valuable benefit of Birst to distributors is related to past due accounts receivable balances. The distributor principal can now monitor the account in the same way as the company, which helps maintain a close working relationship between Miller Industries and the distributor, speeds up the collection process, and minimizes the need for manual reconciliation of account information.

**“ We invested in making sure we have a dashboard for every business information need we have, and now over 80% of questions about the business and its performance can be instantly answered by the current dashboards.”**

**SIAS REYNEKE**  
CIO, Miller Industries

## The road ahead

Miller Industries knows there's an opportunity to leverage its Infor technology stack of Infor LN, Infor CloudSuite Automotive, Infor CloudSuite Workforce Management, Infor OS (Operating Service), the Infor Data Lake, Infor Coleman® AI (artificial intelligence), and Infor Birst analytics to optimize the chassis integration process. Managing the data associated with the chassis and the integration with its back-end products can be challenging and coordinating the arrival of the chassis with the production schedule for the back-end towing and recovery equipment products is critical so that expensive inventory does not sit idle. By using Birst dashboards to coordinate the arrival of the chassis with the completion of the back-end product, Miller Industries can integrate the two, complete the order and deliver the finished product to the customer expeditiously.

Going forward, Miller Industries will consolidate its data strategy by bringing its internal and external data into the Infor Data Lake to replace direct access to on-premises databases. The company will utilize the Infor Coleman AI Platform to mine this data and harness Coleman's powerful machine learning to anticipate future demand in its chassis program. Coleman's findings would then be available in Birst's automated dashboards, providing the company with a real-time picture of its current and anticipated demand. Finally, Miller Industries is currently replacing its current HR system, Kronos, with Infor CloudSuite HCM and extending their Birst dashboards to cover human resources and employee data—increasing the depth of insight available to that essential division of the enterprise.

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