Ready, Set, Check: Plastic Material Fabricator and Distributor Improves Inventory Management Practices with Ignify eCommerce

Country or Region: United States

Customer Profile:
With 17 branch locations and annual revenue approaching $100 million, Cope Plastics, Inc. is the premiere distributor and fabricator of plastic sheet, rod, and tube across the Midwest.

Business Situation:
With a new processing center handling resale material, Cope Plastics needed a way to sell inventory efficiently. The company also wanted a platform that would create an online presence to support longer-term business goals.

Solution:
Ignify eCommerce's seamless integration with Microsoft Dynamics AX provides a transparent, end-to-end solution for managing inventory, processing orders, and efficiently picking the right materials in the warehouse to fulfill the order. This scalable solution sets the foundation for further business development.

Benefits:
- Maximizing Resources and Productivity
- Powerful Item Showcase
- Strengthening Business Expansion with an Online Presence

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Jeff Maynard, Vice President of Administration, Cope Plastics, Inc.

Founded in 1946, Cope Plastics, Inc. is the premier distributor and fabricator of plastic sheet, rod, and tube across the Midwest. Whether customers need engineering plastics, graphics materials, acrylics, polycarbonates, custom fabrication, design assistance, or a multitude of other plastic materials and services, Cope Plastics is dedicated to offering the highest level of custom fabrication and application solution services.

Situation

With 17 branch locations operating across the country, and with the company's annual revenue approaching $100 million, Cope Plastics is rapidly growing. To continuing scaling with this growth, and to set up a solid foundation for further increasing it, Cope Plastics sought an ecommerce platform that would accomplish short- and long-term business goals.

The company's immediate need was that because of its volume and fabrication services, putting sheet, rod, and tube into fabrication facilities to make parts generated a lot of scrap – scrap that was getting thrown away.

"We had two issues with that – number one was environmental, and number two was that money was going out the door into the trash bin," said Jeff Maynard, Vice President of Administration at Cope Plastics. "We found that a lot of that scrap was in pieces or sizes that we believed would be attractive and saleable to opportunistic customers. We decided that we needed to have more of a recycle, re-sale entity, so we created our processing center."

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If the processing center determines that a piece of material is saleable, then the material is put in the company's retail warehouse for sale; if it's scrap, then the company sells it to recyclers. But as the company's account managers and salespeople are focused on bringing in larger customers, such as OEMs and manufacturing partners, Cope needed a way to sell the material that would not take away from its sales team's focus or priorities.

"We have a longer term goal of selling more stock items and other things online, but we wanted to start specifically with the processing center because we wanted to move these retail remnant scrap pieces," said Maynard.

Solution

Ignify eCommerce's integration with Microsoft Dynamics AX, Cope Plastics' ERP system, was a critical factor.

"Our absolute number one requirement was that our eCommerce solution had to integrate with Microsoft Dynamics AX, because all of our inventory exists in Dynamics AX," said Maynard. "We wanted someone who was familiar with Dynamics AX, so the fact that Ignify already had created those integrations was exactly what we were looking for."

Cope Plastics focused on long-term goals when building the online store. Users are able to go into Dynamics AX to any item in inventory and designate it for publishing on the website. A separate form was created in Dynamics AX, under the item inventory, where team members can check or uncheck a checkbox that determines if the item gets published on the website. All of the pertinent information for that particular product (and the information that would be displayed on the website, such as price, quantity, color, etc.) is gathered on that page. If the checkbox is checked, the information is pulled automatically into Ignify eCommerce.

"We had to make it easy for our folks who manage those items because we didn't want them to have to do a lot of setup work," said Maynard. "Once we do backend setup for that item, all they have to do is check or uncheck. They never have to deal with the integration tool manager, or the website – they just continue to do their daily work in Dynamics AX. So that was a big design feature win for us."

Data flows seamlessly between both Dynamics AX and Ignify eCommerce, with price, quantity, and catalog flowing from Dynamics AX to the website, and quote orders, addresses, and customer information entered in the website flowing into Dynamics AX. Overall, this integration provides a transparent, end-to-end solution for managing inventory, processing orders, and efficiently picking the right materials in the warehouse to fulfill the order.

Benefits

Maximizing Resources and Productivity

The integration between Ignify eCommerce and Microsoft Dynamics AX provides powerful communication between inventory and the online store. For instance, if a truck of materials comes to the processing center, the employee can count the inventory, and then since those items are automatically set to integrate with Ignify eCommerce, within 30 minutes the new inventory will show up as available for purchase on the website. Ignify also enabled Cope to prevent orders from exceeding the maximum fixed rate shipping costs set up in Dynamics AX.

Powerful Item Showcase

Ignify eCommerce provides Cope Plastics' customers with an important up-close look into the company's products. Customers can quickly and easily narrow down their search for items by selecting multiple attributes from the filtering menu, such as price, length, outside diameter, color, and product keyword.

"The ability for customers to find what they're looking for is critical," said Maynard. "They can't buy what they can't find."

Strengthening Business Expansion with an Online Presence

Ignify eCommerce's robust features and functionality provide Cope Plastics a web sales channel that will support, and positively impact, business expansion.

"We understand the importance of an online presence from an ecommerce standpoint," said Maynard. "We still look at on-the-ground expansion and new markets, but utilizing the Ignify toolset to grow our online presence is invaluable."

Cope Plastics, Inc.

For more information about Cope Plastics, please visit the online store at http://store.copeplastics.com.

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Ignify is Worldwide Microsoft Partner of the Year since 2010, and offers CRM, eCommerce, ERP, Order Management and POS solutions based on the Microsoft Dynamics line of products. Ignify has been included as the fastest growing business in North America for seven years in a row by Inc. Magazine and Deloitte in the FAST 500 from 2008 to 2013.

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