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Olympic Steel Finds a True Partner in Boyer

When a publicly traded organization built on quality, satisfaction, and accountability was ready to replace a decades-old ERP system with a future-ready solution, they turned to Microsoft Dynamics AX. But after realizing that their current partner was a not a good fit for the new location implementation, IT leadership at Olympic Steel decided to look elsewhere. Seeking a true partner able to deliver flexibility, high value consulting expertise, and reliability, Olympic found just that from our Boyer team.

COMPANY OVERVIEW

Olympic Steel is a name that is synonymous with quality, satisfaction, and accountability. Founded in 1954 by Sol Siegal and Sam Sigel, the company has spent nearly six decades growing from warehousing and distribution of steel to a complete partner for companies in need of steel in a variety of forms.

Every day, companies turn to Olympic to produce and provide solutions including hot and cold rolled steel, coated metals, alloy, heat treat and AR, as well as tube, pipe, and bar, among others. Much like Boyer, this company has stayed true to its founders' original vision of developing long-lasting relationships with employees, suppliers, and customers.

Specifically focused on the manufacturing and distribution of both sheet and plate products for clients in the Midwest, the Minnesota division of Olympic Steel has two facilities built to handle plate distribution and fabricated parts as well as the slitting, blanking, stretcher leveling, cutting to length, and laser processing of steel products. Committed to superior quality products and exceptional service, this location had noticed that their legacy ERP was no longer a plausible option for the long-term needs of the business.

The Move from Legacy to AX

After using the same legacy platform for more than three decades, the Olympic staff and leadership teams felt there were system limitations to the business growth in addition to business risk of having unsupportable systems.

STRONG SINCE 1954
OLYMPIC**STEEL**

COMPANY

Name: Olympic Steel

olysteel.com

Location: Highland Hills, OH

Industry:
Metals Service Centers

Employees: 1,626

Revenue: $1.2 billion

KEY RESULTS

- Implement new locations leveraging internal resources rather than 100% reliance on consultants

- Integrate with other software used that supports corporate objectives that span companies and ERPs

- Visibility into production costing and productivity

- Track and trace based on batch numbers/batch attributes

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Understandably, with a product implemented when MS-DOS was king, the company was facing a burning platform moment. The product Olympic needed to leave, CDS, was highly customized and running out of consultants who understood the code base.

"That particular system was in excess of 30 years of age, it was highly customized software [and used a] very unique architecture," said Chris Garrett, VP of Information Services for the Flat Roll division. *"We were at that point in the system's lifecycle where we just had to get off of it […] It was ready to be retired."*

Added to this, the solution provider had moved away from the specific legacy product line, and as noted by Garrett, *"There were two, maybe three people in [the solution provider's] organization who knew the programming language and the underlying technology to support the software."*

As with any highly customized legacy software implemented in the late 80s, the biggest challenge wasn't the product, but the people who supported it. *"[Developers] were approaching retirement, so we were simply at the point where we had to move on,"* Garrett adds.

In his path to a new ERP solution, Garrett sought out vendors able to provide the functionality, background, and productivity enhancements promised in a modern product. Initially considering existing ERP systems in place at the company's plants (SEMS and Dynamics AX), he knew the decision would be based on the system's ability to meet the needs of mixed mode and complex manufacturing requirements like multilevel BOMs and routes, and that between the two, Dynamics AX (now Dynamics 365 Finance and Operations) would be able to deliver.

Finding a Supportable and Long-Lasting Product

In their journey away from the highly customized CDS legacy system, Garrett's goal was to find a solution that gave better visibility and continued to deliver results for years to come. *"Our primary impetus was to get on a platform that was supportable in the future,"* notes Garrett. *"In terms of new features, we needed*

the costing functionality to get fully costed production jobs and inventory. […] We needed full insight into the cost and the productivity."

To get this, Olympic turned to Microsoft Dynamics AX. A solution already trusted by Olympic Steel's Southeast Region and Chambersburg, PA locations, Dynamics AX, now named Dynamics 365 Finance and Operations, has been used in the manufacturing world for decades. Acquired by Microsoft in 2002, Dynamics 365 Finance and Operations provides a unified solution to empower decision makers.

Purpose-built, adaptable, intelligent, and future-proof, Garrett knew that with a bit of work, Dynamics AX would be able to fit perfectly into the Minneapolis branch's technology stack.

With flat roll operations built on customization, responsiveness, and value-add service rather than tracking individual SKUs, Garrett knew that some changes would be needed to make AX work for them.

The Need for a Partner Who Makes Business Better

But that was the least of the worries. Already staffed with AX technical expertise and a solution that worked in other locations, Garrett was less concerned with the customizations that needed to be made and more about the value-added reseller that they initially chose to get the implementation done.

"Our existing ERP partner at the time was a larger partner whose business model was built on greenfield clients," Garrett adds, noting that the initial partner was less focused on augmenting expertise and more on using their standard process with a fully loaded team. Unfortunately, this was the opposite of what Olympic Steel needed from a partner.

As someone who has managed a variety of ERP implementations over the years for other lines, Garrett knew that his team was well equipped to handle parts of the implementation internally but needed a partner ready to deliver project management and functional augmentation in areas they lacked expertise.

Ultimately, Garrett quickly learned his existing partner was not going to provide the fit needed in the implementation, and that if Olympic continued to work with them, there would be a lot of unnecessary costs and butting of heads. *"They were more suited to run the whole show, while we already had a staff to do the project management. Though they did have great technical resources, their functional resources simply weren't a good fit."*

What Olympic needed was a partner who could provide three things—flexibility, high value consulting expertise, and reliability—and for that, he turned to Boyer.

From Bad Fit to Functional Expertise: Olympic Steel Turns to Boyer

With a history of working with Dynamics AX from version Axapta 1.0 in 1998 to now with Dynamics 365, Boyer knows that there are many ways to get through the implementation—and was ready to meet Olympic Steel's needs. After interviewing a variety of prospective partners, Garrett realized that few implementation partners had the expertise of Boyer, and fewer were ready to adapt to Olympic Steel's needs.

"We were looking for a partner that could fill the holes that our IT team could not accommodate internally," says Garrett. "One of those was finance and accounting support, and [Boyer Managing Director] Catherine Dean brought her proven personal experience to the table helped to seal the deal."

Ultimately, Garrett saw Boyer as the perfect fit to take them onto the Dynamics AX platform, explaining that the Minnesota branch was not only able to deliver what Olympic needed, but was able to put their best people on the job. "We knew Boyer was appropriately sized for our needs and we could get their top tiered functional resources […] It was a better sized fit for our project."

After selecting Boyer, Olympic Steel was able to run the project how they wanted it to be run, with Boyer offering the support and flexibility they needed for a successful project. "Cathy's group has been incredibly successful in helping fill our bandwidth needs and fit perfectly with our team's technical and functional skillset," adds Garrett. "The Boyer team was able to step in and successfully get the product into position."

The results? Simple.

A project that was completed on time and under budget with no surprises—and for a public company like Olympic Steel, that's exactly what is supposed to happen. Thanks to Microsoft Dynamics AX and Boyer, they now can:

- **Implement new locations leveraging internal resources rather than 100% reliance on consultants**
- **Integrate with other software used that supports corporate objectives that span companies and ERPs**
- **Have visibility into production costing and productivity**
- **Track and trace based on batch numbers / batch attributes**

Since the initial implementation, Olympic Steel turned to Boyer in mid-2019 to support an acquisition-driven AX implementation and once again delivered the reliable guidance and assistance needed.

The Right Partner, The Right Fit, and No Surprises — Boyer

Boyer is more than a name; it is a culture at our company. Our goal is to provide value on every single project and service ticket. We know that ERP systems and your processes can be a complex combination that requires special

attention and understand that it's important to get you the right resource to help you at the inception of your issue. Boyer implements other companies like Olympic that have multiple divisions with specific requirements that their parent company's ERP cannot accommodate or that are too cumbersome.

Whether it's a surprise-free implementation run by your team or a much more hands-on effort on our end, we have been doing this for decades and are ready to make your business better with empowered, connected data.

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