

Business Drivers

- > Replace Legacy System
- > Improve Information Access
- > Integrate Accounting & Distribution Processes

"After our people, information is Travelon's most important asset. Apprise ERP gives us real-time access to more in-depth and accurate information, so we can better manage this critical business asset."

*— Roberto Mustacchi
Chief Financial Officer*



Profile in Brief

- > Distributes branded travel accessories to a variety of retail luggage outlets across North America
- > Manufactures in and imports from Asia
- > Privately held business with headquarters in Des Plaines, IL

Global Distributor Loses Legacy System — Gains Business Improvements

Travelon is no stranger to change. Having started out in 1978 as a domestic manufacturer of luggage carts, Travelon has evolved into a value-added designer and importer distributing a variety of travel accessories to luggage retailers and a wide range of private label goods to wholesale distributors across North America.

In 1999, when a change in ownership drove the need for Travelon to completely overhaul its information systems, it was just one more change that CFO Roberto Mustacchi knew they could handle.

The change would require a complete departure from their legacy accounting system, including hardware and software. And, they had twelve months in which to complete it.

In Search Of: Adaptable, Enterprise-Wide Solution

"After our people, information is Travelon's most important asset," said Roberto Mustacchi, CFO, Travelon. "We leveraged this opportunity to find a solution that would give us improved access to deeper and more accurate information, as well as enable us to integrate our accounting system with our enterprise-wide distribution processes."

Travelon sought real-time insight into its sales, product line, customer, and supplier performance so that it could improve its business decisions, reduce costs, and increase profitability. Increased overseas manufacturing and importing created long inventory lead times that drove more stringent requirements for inventory forecasting, planning and management; shipment tracking; and management of landed costs. Constant evolution demanded that the new solution be adaptable to changes in Travelon's business.

The Solution: Apprise® ERP

An internal cross-functional team, led by Mustacchi, narrowed the vendor choices from fifteen, down to eight, for initial review. Later, the field was narrowed down to four, for in-depth evaluation. "Almost from the start, Apprise ERP was the solution of choice over competing products," said Mustacchi. "Apprise ERP was the most comprehensive, enterprise-wide solution designed for distribution."

Extensive financial management, importing and landed cost management, inventory forecasting, planning, and management, and purchasing capabilities set Apprise ERP apart. As did the comprehensive executive information system included in the system. The rule-based environment within Apprise ERP gave Travelon the flexibility and control it needed to gain valuable, real-time business insights that improve decision making and drive positive results directly to the bottom line.

Business Impact

- > Margin Alert Saved Travelon \$25,000 within First Weeks of Implementation
- > Streamlined Inventory
- > Business-Wide Visibility

"Within the first two weeks of implementation, Apprise's rule-based margin management saved us \$25,000. We knew right away we had made the right decision in selecting Apprise."

*— Roberto Mustacchi
Chief Financial Officer*

Enterprise-Wide Improvements

Thorough, professional, and on-time implementation resulted in minimized business disruption. The Apprise implementation team's industry expertise provided valuable insights and enabled Travelon to apply business process improvements throughout the implementation process. Within the first two weeks after implementation, the rule-based margin management capabilities identified an order pricing error and alerted management to take action — saving Travelon \$25,000, which flowed directly to the bottom line.

The improved depth of, and access to, information and reporting, provides greater visibility into costs and cost drivers, product performance, and sales trends," said Dan Sowinski, accountant, Travelon. "We are able to better understand and manage product costs, product line profitability, sales performance, and customer trends and profitability." Even in times of difficult economic conditions, Travelon has continued to increase profitability by reducing costs and by leveraging performance data to expand or discontinue product lines in order to maximize revenue.

Real-time, integrated views of inventory — from customer forecasts and pending orders, to inventory on hand, on order, and in transit — have streamlined the inventory planning, purchasing and management process resulting in efficiency gains. Improved insights into true landed costs have enabled Travelon to reduce costs and increase profitability.

The streamlined integration of financial management within the enterprise-wide distribution application has resulted in significant month-end closing efficiency gains. Real-time, rule-based batching and posting, and automated and historical reporting capabilities, have reduced what previously took one or more days down to just hours.

Looking to the Future

As Travelon looks to the future, the focus is on continued growth in revenues and profitability through increased branded sales and the expansion of private label lines of business. These plans will entail further utilization of the capabilities within the Apprise® ERP solution.

With an upgrade planned to the most recent version of Apprise ERP, Travelon plans to make extensive use of new and upgraded features, including credit and collection processing, budgeting, and accounts receivables reporting. Plans also include expanded and integrated use of Apprise EDI for branded product line sales to large retailers, as well as integration with UPS shipping and tracking capabilities for streamlined tracking, managing, and proof of delivery across product lines.



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