

Northline Express
www.NorthlineExpress.com

COMPANY

- Location: Headquarters in Northern Michigan; 20-30 employees (adjusted seasonally)
- Industry: E-commerce sales focused on home-related products

OVERVIEW

Northline Express sells thousands of home-oriented products online. With plans to expand their e-commerce presence, Northline Express knew they needed a new solution. They selected Acumatica to improve their financial system’s integration with its website, manage data, and enhance productivity.

SOLUTION

Acumatica Suites and Modules

- Financial Management Suite
- Distribution Management Suite

Add-Ons

- Magento
- Kensium ECommerce Management System (KEMS)
- Kensium Stock Item Enhancement (SIE)

KEY RESULTS

- Improved data management, easier, more accurate tracking and reporting of financial data
- Enhanced integration with e-commerce websites
- Automated processes save management time and effort
- Increased inventory visibility and replenishment adds to customer satisfaction and reduces carrying costs

E-retailer switches to Acumatica, benefits from enhanced integration between financials and e-commerce website

“It’s all about the data—the ease of getting data in, managing the data, reloading the data. That part of Acumatica is really spectacular ... it’s going to make life a lot easier.”

- Robert Cochran, CEO, Northline Express

SITUATION

Northline Express operates three e-commerce sites (NorthlineExpress.com, WoodEze.com and MosquitoControlTrap.com) along with marketplaces on Amazon, eBay and Rakuten offering over 17,000 SKUs to their customers.

Having run businesses since the age of 20, CEO Robert Cochran founded Northline Express in 2001, selling fireplaces and heating devices over the Internet. “I saw the e-commerce side of things evolving and wanted to be part of it,” he says.

In the beginning, Mr. Cochran says, “I originally started using Mail Order Manager (MOM) software, but we quickly outgrew that and moved to Everest.” He soon realized he needed more: “Everest just lacked functionality. It wasn’t keeping up or evolving as software, so we realized we needed to move forward with something more robust, with more current technology.”

With online competition growing, Mr. Cochran says he needed a new solution: “It came down to how easy it was to set up new products and automate functions. The old system wasn’t designed well—compared to Acumatica—for getting data in and out.

Integrating third-party apps was almost impossible with Everest, and we finally gave up.”

SOLUTION

Northline Express spent three years searching for the right product to address its needs. Mr. Cochran explains, “We looked at NetSuite. We looked back at MOM to see if they had a more robust application than they had when they left them (and they didn’t). We looked at Stone Edge. We looked at Response. We looked at practically everything out there.”

When he connected with Acumatica Gold Certified Partner Joel Gress at Dynamic Tech Services, Mr. Cochran knew he’d found the right product: “He showed me Acumatica, and I really didn’t want to look any further. It looked like the way to go for us.”

Northline Express decided to purchase Acumatica 5.0 with the Financial Management and Distribution Management Suites. “The biggest thing in finding a



package was that it had to integrate with the Magento (e-commerce) website,” Mr. Cochran states. “It also had to handle configurable items. They added that functionality into Acumatica because we have about 600 bundles, or configurable-type items. That was key to us for making it work—and it’s working.”

Mr. Cochran adds, “I like the fact that it’s in the cloud and on our server. We’re not having to host in our local network like we had to do with Everest as a client-server application. It wasn’t really built for that, whereas Acumatica is built to be a web-based application.”

“Another major consideration was the ability to manage inventory replenishment. You spend a lot of time bringing product into a warehouse so you have what you need when people want it. Acumatica is built for that,” Mr. Cochran says. “The purchasing, the Internet integration, and the bundles—those were the components that would either make or break the deal. From what I’ve seen, Acumatica is going to help us really fly in the long run.”

BENEFITS

CEO Cochran understands code and values how easily he can grasp Acumatica’s documentation: “I need to know how it works and what I need to do to reduce my support costs. I really like it. The more I dig into things, the more impressed I am. When I look at building custom and generic queries, I’m impressed at how easy it is to put together.”

Mr. Cochran appreciates how much time Acumatica will save them through

automation. For example, he says, “In our old system, we were reviewing about 150 vendors every week, item by item. My son was looking at every item—about 3,600 items every week—to see if we needed more stock. I need him doing other things. It didn’t allow us to grow.”

Now, he says, the automation they need can be built into Acumatica. “It can be configured to run the business however you deem necessary—I like that. I also like that it’s built on the Microsoft platform. It works.”

The CEO also values being able to make better use of his financial information, noting that “it’s all about the data—the ease of getting data in, managing the data, reloading the data. That part of Acumatica is really spectacular, in terms of exporting to Excel, manipulating it, and re-importing it. It’s going to make life a lot easier.”

Mr. Cochran plans to continue enhancing his system with Acumatica. For example, he says, “We have about 17,000 SKUs in our list of products, and we’d like to grow to between 50,000 and 100,000. We need to be able to integrate manufacturers or vendors along with their inventory and the availability of their products. Integrating with our vendors, pushing data back and forth between us and them, getting tracking information, and getting our billing automated—if we can automate these things, which I know we can, it will enable us to grow.”

Northline is considering adding on warehouse management and shipping applications. “We need the open interface that Acumatica has in order to hook in third-

party applications,” Mr. Cochran says. “Not all systems are that open. As technology improves, I want to keep adding what’s out there into Acumatica.”

Mr. Cochran believes Acumatica will also help Northline Express compete. “When you’re looking at bringing on several thousand new products, it’s a huge task; it can take months,” he explains. “Bringing new products online as they come out, quickly and efficiently, is really vital in the e-commerce space. Things are moving at light speed on the web right now.”

Mr. Cochran adds, “I’m happy with the product—and I know databases and systems.” He adds that in spite of the expected bumps during the transition, “I’ve been in some really bad implementations, but I’m really happy with this one. I made the right decision.”

He’s shared his enthusiasm about Acumatica with other business owners. “There’s strength in numbers,” Cochran stresses. “If I find something that’s good, it behooves me to tell others so that we have more users out there and we’re all helping each other, growing the product.”

One of his goals in choosing Acumatica was to ensure that the company he built will have a system in place to sustain and progress it in the future: “I wanted to make sure that as my legacy, I leave something that can be carried on.”