

Waldmann Lighting , A Company with Visionary Products and Philosophy

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■ The Company

Waldmann Lighting is truly a company with vision. Not only does it produce quality lighting products that impart better vision, but it is also a company with a visionary philosophy. Waldmann, which is ISO 9001 certified, boasts several lines of superior task lighting products specially designed to reduce glare and eye fatigue and which carry a long-term warranty.

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- Jan Schaefer
 Co-President, Waldmann Lighting

Waldmann Lighting also realizes that competitive superiority depends upon coupling quality products with exceptional customer service. In fact, it was the latter which prompted Waldmann’s U.S. unit to search for an ERP software solution in 1998. Says Jan Schaefer, Co-President of Waldmann’s U.S. entity, “We wanted to match the quality of our products with quality customer service. We felt a new ERP solution would enable us to elevate customer service based, in part, on an ability to provide the highest levels of technical support and quote and keep promised delivery dates.”

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Waldmann’s U.S. subsidiary, located on a five-acre site in Wheeling, Ill., was established in 1982. Since its inception, the subsidiary has experienced a substantial annual growth rate. In 1996, an 18,000 square foot facility expansion was completed, increasing the production, warehouse and assembly plant to 30,000 square feet. Today, most products sold in North America are assembled and inventoried at this plant.

■ The Challenge

Waldman uses several channels of distribution, depending on the products and associated markets. These various distribution layers require the maintenance of highly detailed records. Waldmann sells its machine tool, magnification, and medical task lights through distributors that specialize in either the metalworking machine, electronics or medical markets. In addition, the company works directly with OEM customers, such as machine tool builders, workstation manufacturers, and lab furniture builders. Waldmann sells its office task lights

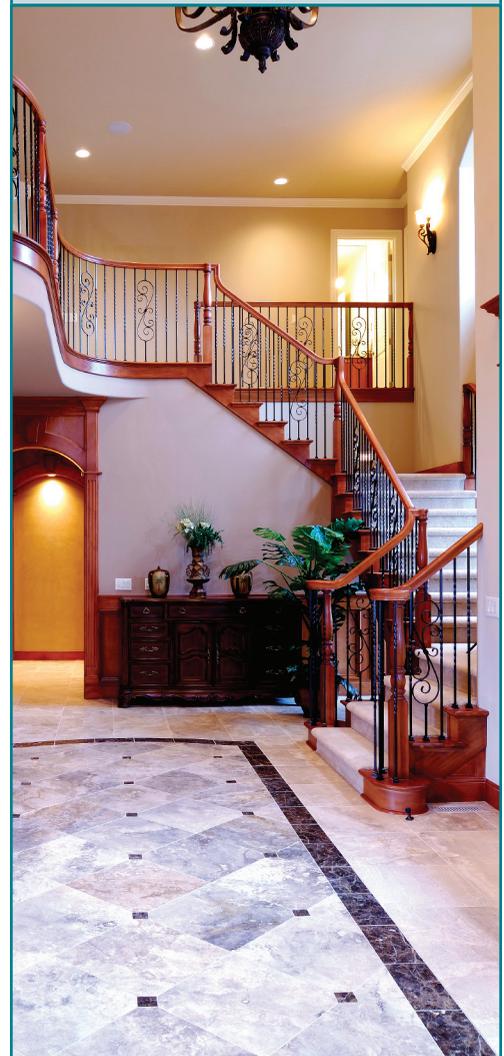
■ AT A GLANCE ■

COMPANY

Waldmann Lighting

INDUSTRY

Manufacturer



Waldmann W
 ENGINEER OF LIGHT.



through North American contract furniture dealers. The company's Derungs Division has the responsibility for manufacturing and marketing task lighting and magnifiers for physicians, hospital rooms, minor surgery, dental and ophthalmic exams, veterinary applications, cosmetology, and general laboratory use. In addition, Waldmann offers durable lighting arms, which it sells primarily on an OEM basis.

Most products for the U.S. market are assembled in Wheeling with parts imported from Waldmann in Germany. The often-lengthy shipping time makes accurate forecasting a necessity, and, in fact, was one of the factors that motivated Waldmann U.S. to seek an ERP solution in 1998. According to Schaefer, the company realized the quality of its products provided a competitive edge; however, it knew industry leadership was equally dependent on a commitment to the highest levels of customer service. Notes Schaefer, "We knew we had to become more sophisticated in our production planning and scheduling and the only way to do it was with MRP software integrated to equally sophisticated accounting, order entry and inventory management software." The company's large investment in inventory was also a major concern. With elevating costs, it was critical to coordinate inventory and manufacturing schedules. Waldmann had been using a "small accounting package," and all product forecasting, inventory tracking and other essential functions were performed manually. "We had stacks of papers and folders everywhere," says Schaefer. "The processes were very labor intensive."

■ The Solution

Schaefer hired a consultant to determine the best software fit. After an extensive search the choice was SYSPRO, an enterprise business software solution from SYSPRO USA. One of the factors prompting the choice was the proximity and technical knowledge of SYSPRO Value Added Reseller, Business Technology Partners (BTP). In fact, notes Schaefer, BTP not only facilitated the implementation of the SYSPRO solution, but also assisted in automating and coordinating various business processes to leverage the full advantages of the new software.

■ The Result

Because SYSPRO is a modular system, BTP assisted Waldmann in selecting those modules fundamental to Waldmann's objectives. BTP suggested the addition of SYSPRO ODBC to extend the functionality of the system and solve a long-standing problem – that of keeping field sales personnel abreast of changes in customer status. ODBC allows third party programs to access the SYSPRO database on a read and/or write basis. Today, BTP uses a combination of Crystal Reports and Microsoft Access for an automated system that forwards updated reports to the field via email on a daily and monthly basis. The reports, consisting of copies of invoices, credit reports, sales details and monthly recaps, alerts the sales force to the current status of customers. Prior to the automated process, invoices and credit reports had to be physically copied, a time consuming and often neglected process. By automating the process, sales personnel get timely customer information, and Waldmann customer service representatives, freed from answering sales force inquiries, can devote more time to taking care of customers.

BTP also recommended the addition of another SYSPRO module, Barcode for SYSPRO, to track both labor and warehouse bin transfers. A critical problem at Waldmann was tracking the whereabouts of parts in the warehouse due to elapsed time between the issuing and recording of warehouse bin transfer tickets. By implementing Barcode for SYSPRO, transfers are now scanned in and captured in real-time resulting in the accurate tracking of all parts.

Additionally, workers on the assembly floor can now log in and out of jobs by scanning their badges. Again, the real-time feedback of information into the SYSPRO database provides Waldmann office personnel with complete visibility into the status of jobs on the assembly floor.

Because SYSPRO has brought inventory into balance with more accurate forecasting, lower inventory levels are now maintained. States Todd Perlman, a principal of BTP, "A major problem at Waldmann was the purchasing of excess stock in order to ensure the availability of parts to build forecasted production. We demonstrated how MRP can balance forecasted production and inventory requirements. Now,



Waldmann is able to maintain lower inventory levels while sustaining high levels of customer service through timely deliveries.”

According to Schaefer, the choice of SYSPRO is validated on a daily basis. “It has truly been a blessing,” she states. “Overall efficiency has greatly improved. We’re expending far fewer man-hours to perform tasks that we used to do by hand. Moreover, with our ability to make accurate forecasts, we stay ahead of the game in ordering parts from Germany, providing them with longer lead times, as well. The result is the German operation can, in turn, be more sophisticated in planning its production.”

“Perhaps,” she concludes, “the greatest dividend we’ve experienced is enhanced customer service. We now have the ability to make and keep promised delivery dates and can look into the system to determine order status. We have truly succeeded in matching quality product with quality service.”