

Why Are Kitchen Cabinet Manufacturers Selecting Frontier?

Enterprise Software For Cabinet Manufacturers

MASTERBRAND CABINETS, INC., JASPER, INDIANA

MasterBrand Cabinets (MBCI) is one of the largest manufacturers of quality kitchen cabinets in North America. The company accommodates a wide range of customer taste and budget by offering hundreds of selections and styles through its family of brands that provide a complete selection from RTD and fully assembled stock, to semi-custom product lines.

In recent years MBCI has increased their product offerings through product innovations and acquisitions, through which Schrock, Diamond, Kemper and NHB product lines were added to its already popular Aristokraft and Decora lines of kitchen cabinets.

However, MBCI realized its existing information systems could not accommodate its current growth demands and were faced with inefficiencies that may impede company's future growth. The systems utilized by the semi-custom brands were not flexible enough to handle the increase in door styles, finishes and options (including dimensionality) that these new product lines required. MBCI determined it needed a new software system to meet growth demands and eliminate inefficiencies, thereby reducing costs, reducing mistakes, increasing quality and providing easy access to data to aid decision making. As a result MBCI made a strategic decision to search for a new ERP system that could handle the complexities of the semi-custom and custom product lines.

In addition to a configuration-based ERP system, MBCI looked for e-Commerce capabilities for its customers and vendors, as well as integration with other leading software products used by the kitchen cabinet industry i.e. 20-20, the number one kitchen layout design software. MBCI's two-year search for a new system recently concluded with a decision to purchase the Frontier ERP System, from Friedman Corporation.

The Frontier system is designed around an integrated product configurator and has had proven success in other companies that manufacture high-volumes of building and home products with many options and dimensionality requirements, including: custom windows, doors, upholstered furniture and kitchen cabinetry.

According to Dennis VanderWeide, IS Director at MBCI, "This project is considered a very strategic move for our company in providing our customers with a true partner in the increasing world of e-Commerce; Our customers will be provided internet access for increased visibility to their orders and we will have full integration with the kitchen layout design tools they are using in-house."

MBCI plans to implement Frontier across the semi-custom cabinet divisions over the coming months. MBCI is encouraged that the operational improvements gained with the Friedman solution will assure the company seamless management of its growth while utilizing technology to maintain a leadership position in the current economy. VanderWeide adds, "This product will provide us the tools to maintain and increase our competitive edge in our market."

TRU-WOOD CABINETS, ASHLAND, AL

Tru-Wood Cabinets is one of the more unique wood cabinet builders in two respects. Its cabinets are made completely of wood, not the more traditional particle board and wood veneer that cabinet makers often use. And, it manufactures all the parts to all its products, choosing not to subcontract any portion of its cabinet production such as cabinet door manufacturing. By adhering to quality standards, the company enjoys a reputation for quality mid- to high-end cabinetry and Tru-Wood dealers and customers are assured consistency with every order.

Behind the scenes, Tru-Wood faced difficulties with manually managing the flow of materials through inventory and the plant. Tru-Wood Cabinets feels their in-house developed software did not have any real inventory and planning capabilities. It also was weak in materials management: they could only take an order and generate a work order, however Tru-Wood needed a better system that covered the gamut, from order entry through production then onto shipping and delivery.

Researching the array of available systems, Tru-Wood honed in on a packaged solution that cabinet industry peers overwhelmingly used and recommended. It was the only solution with templates designed specifically for the cabinet industry, allowing a fast-path implementation unmatched in the enterprise software marketplace.

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Tru-Wood reflects that Friedman Corporation's Frontier solution focuses on the needs of cabinet makers. Other software vendors couldn't demonstrate an understanding of their business with their software. For example, the capabilities of Frontier's front end dimensional configurator is unrivaled by any other configurator.

Measurable improvements are expected from implementing Frontier. In the front end order entry process, Frontier handles order validation to ensure the products ordered can be built. Tru-Wood also will gain control over materials and inventory management. Frontier's manufacturing and production system will allow Tru-Wood to track material using bar codes from the minute the lumber arrives until it ships out as a cabinet on a truck.

Tru-Wood looks to Frontier to help manage growth through anticipated increases in cabinet orders. Many larger cabinet companies are successfully operating and growing with Frontier. Tru-Wood visited some of these sites and saw Frontier in action. They can continue to build a high-quality product without compromising planning, production and delivery schedules.

PRESTIGE, NEODESHA, KS

Prestige is a small manufacturer catering to the middle end of the kitchen cabinet market. The company specializes in an array of wood cabinets, including knotty pine. Prestige handles its administration and order entry operations from its Independence headquarters and runs its manufacturing and corporate financial operations from its plant in Neodesha, KS.

Relying on a network of regional distributors to market its products, approximately 80-percent of Prestige's cabinet orders are make-to-order requests. By nature, these orders are complex and option rich and often require additional customization. Clear communication of order information is vital between the distributors and Prestige. Otherwise, orders could arrive with inaccuracies that hamper the buildability and potentially cause delays in the manufacturing and delivery of its cabinets.

Looking at the bottlenecks that were blocking the flow of information, Prestige deemed its homegrown Unix system to be too cumbersome and disjointed. Prestige ran the traditional order entry, manufacturing and financial applications, but lack of integrated system made change difficult. Prestige finally decided to pursue a more standardized, integrated software solution that could grow with the company. They found their industry peers were running the Frontier configuration based enterprise system from Friedman Corporation.

Prestige selected Frontier and quickly gravitated to its integrated dealer system, satisfied it could tackle the issues of order configuration and pricing accuracy. It's now easier for them to enter their distributors' orders, and Frontier's configurator assures that the cabinets can be built and the pricing is accurate.



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