EZ-FLO: Family-Run Company Keeps Business Flowing Globally with SAP® Software

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Partner

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Company

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Company
EZ-FLO International Inc.

Industry
Consumer products

Products and Services
Plumbing and hardware supplies

Web Site
www.ez-flo.net

SAP® Solutions
ID4 Durable Goods, a qualified SAP® Business All-in-One partner solution offered by Idhasoft Inc. and based on the SAP Business All-in-One for Consumer Products solution

How can your family-run business maintain its laser focus on delivering stellar customer service while growing operations globally? For EZ-FLO International Inc. – an internationally recognized manufacturer of quality plumbing supplies – the answer was to deploy software based on the SAP® Business All-in-One for Consumer Products solution. "SAP software empowers us to **run lean, efficient processes** that help us keep our customers satisfied," explains Paul Wilson, president of EZ-FLO.

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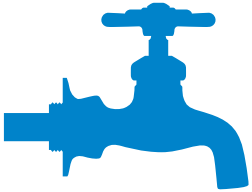
An internationally recognized manufacturer

California-based EZ-FLO is a global manufacturer of quality plumbing supplies and distributor of plumbing, electrical, HVAC, and hardware supplies, including flexible supply lines, stop valves, faucets, and appliance connectors. The company stocks more than 6,000 plumbing products for same-day shipment to leading plumbing and hardware retailers and wholesalers across the United States and around the world. In fact, its 350 employees have helped it become the industry-leading supplier of more than 5,000 products. EZ-FLO has grown significantly in recent years, strengthening its manufacturing facilities in China and opening new distribution centers in the United States.



6,000

Plumbing products and components

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Maintaining a competitive edge

This successful family-run business has experienced double-digit growth in recent years. However, as company executives are quick to point out, a broad product line is not enough in this industry. Staying competitive depends on exceeding customer expectations. "We wanted to maintain market momentum while running lean operations to keep costs down," explains Wilson.

As it sought to pursue new opportunities, such as working with plumbing contractors across the United States, the company realized it needed to ensure inventory was in the right place at the right time. "We are committed to delivering on our pledge of unsurpassed customer service," continues Wilson.

However, EZ-FLO had been relying on a custom-developed in-house solution that failed to provide the required functionality and ease of use. "We wanted to optimize the operations that help us deliver our superior customer service," recalls Wilson. It was clear that EZ-FLO needed a feature-rich, scalable business platform to quickly and cost-effectively serve its customers while supporting its growth.

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Plumbing the depths for the ideal solution

After looking at solutions from multiple vendors, EZ-FLO found the right fit with ID4 Durable Goods, a qualified SAP Business All-in-One partner solution. The software, which is from Idhasoft Inc., is based on the SAP Business All-in-One for Consumer Products solution. Company executives were particularly impressed by the software's support for best business practices and global operations. "As a small company with ambitious growth plans, we want to use best practices whenever possible," says Wilson.

Just as important was Idhasoft's expertise in implementing SAP software. "We maintain a lean IT group and wanted to take advantage of expert outside resources to ensure a successful implementation," continues Wilson.

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Getting up and running quickly

Working closely with Idhasoft, EZ-FLO rolled out functionality ranging from financials to warehouse management at the company's headquarters and Texas distribution and manufacturing facility. Within five months, nearly 100 employees were using the solution on a regular basis.

Clara Lahlouh Paye, general manager at EZ-FLO, identified several factors that contributed to the successful launch of the solution: strong sponsorship by senior management, a comprehensive blueprint, and one-on-one training for the company's veteran workforce. In fact, the blueprint and training were so thorough that EZ-FLO's small IT group was able to roll out the software in its China facility on its own one year after the initial launch.

"SAP software enables us to support employees around the world very cost-effectively. It provides us with a phenomenal total cost of ownership."

Paul Wilson, President, EZ-FLO International Inc.

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Ensuring data accuracy and real-time visibility

With standardized, documented processes leading the way, EZ-FLO is driving efficiencies across the growing company – particularly in its critical warehouse and manufacturing operations. Now, for example, as distribution centers receive new merchandise, EZ-FLO's business systems automatically help ensure inventory accuracy by cross-checking information such as product quantities and bin locations.

Managers use verification alerts to correct errors quickly and to identify areas for process improvement. In addition, the system automatically updates the stock information as each new customer order is entered, providing real-time visibility into EZ-FLO's extensive inventory.

"In a commodity business like EZ-FLO, the ability to exceed your customers' expectations is what separates you from the competition. SAP software helps us deliver the absolute best service anywhere."

Paul Wilson, President, EZ-FLO International Inc.

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Improving the flow of business

Warehouse processes are now so accurate that EZ-FLO eliminated the need for a year-end inventory – a once-manual task that required a two-day effort by some 100 employees. The company has also streamlined the manufacturing operations that refuel its critical supply chain. Better bill-of-materials functionality – along with immediate access to information on customer demand, raw materials inventory, and work in process – has improved purchasing planning and order processing. As a result, EZ-FLO has slashed manufacturing lead times by an estimated two weeks. And company executives have experienced a reduction in lead time in their Chinese facility to 15 days from 30 to 45 days.

Today, with fewer processing errors and back orders, Wilson reports "extremely positive customer feedback" about the company's fill rates. Moreover, he is also pleased to note that business at EZ-FLO continues to grow. Wilson estimates a better than 20% increase in new customers and a 12% boost in sales per customer. Significantly, EZ-FLO is achieving this growth while maintaining its historic 98.6% service level.

At the same time, the company has enhanced its online ordering process for plumbing manufacturers and master distributors by taking advantage of support for e-commerce within the qualified SAP Business All-in-One partner solution. "By tying our online ordering into ID4 Durable Goods, we can efficiently process and keep track of orders," explains Wilson.

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More benefits on tap

Since first deploying the ID4 Durable Goods software with the help of Idhasoft, EZ-FLO has rolled out the software to its expanded warehouse operations across the United States – without outside assistance. Going forward, the company may implement SAP BusinessObjects™ software so it can develop highly visual dashboards that enable it to track key performance indicators and further improve business operations.

"SAP software enables us to cost-effectively support our growing operations and strategic vision."

Paul Wilson, President, EZ-FLO International Inc.

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