

HOW LIFETIME PRODUCTS MAKES PROGRESS



THE CHALLENGE OF BUSINESS GROWTH

When you produce millions of products annually, it is crucial that business operations run efficiently. When you are the CIO, it is your job to make sure it can be done. Lifetime Products is the global leader in the production of polyethylene folding tables, chairs, picnic tables and residential basketball equipment. The company employs 2,300 people worldwide and distributes its products to more than 50 countries. During its 15 years in business, the manufacturing giant has experienced tremendous growth and, consequently, faced new business and technology challenges.

Initially a small business operating out of a garage, Lifetime rapidly grew to become a U.S. market leader. But the company's infrastructure was not equipped to deal with the quick growth. Lifetime was managing its data through Excel spreadsheets and other manual processes. "Our business methods were not designed to support our rapid expansion," explains John Bowden, CIO of Lifetime



CHALLENGE

Supporting rapid business growth and global expansion

SOLUTION

Integrate and automate major business processes worldwide with a Progress®-based ERP solution

BENEFIT

99.99% system uptime; reduced management time—10 times fewer person hours required for managing OpenEdge versus other platforms; easily scaling to support rapid business growth and expansion into 50 countries

Products. “As a result our operating costs were too high, and our productivity levels were insufficient to meet our objectives. It was clear we needed a more sophisticated technology strategy to remain competitive.”

Lifetime had a clear objective to expand the business, so Bowden and his team needed a solution that had the flexibility and scalability to evolve with the company’s needs while keeping its costs low. Also, the solution they chose had to be easy to use and require very little maintenance.

CHOOSING PROGRESS TO SUPPORT CURRENT AND FUTURE NEEDS

Lifetime initially turned to Progress in the 1990s in its search for an ERP solution. Bowden and his team originally looked at a variety of products, including Progress and Oracle but chose Progress Software based on the reliability, flexibility and low total cost of ownership Progress® OpenEdge® offered over the competition. “With Oracle we would need at least one full-time database administrator (DBA) to keep the system up and running. OpenEdge is almost self-maintaining and does not require a DBA. That was a significant factor in our decision making process,” explains Bowden. Lifetime implemented an OpenEdge-based ERP solution to integrate and automate major business processes, including accounting, customer service, finance and inventory management.

OPENEDGE SUPPORTS GLOBAL EXPANSION

Since its first Progress implementation, Lifetime has continued to grow significantly, expanding its product line and its employee base from a few hundred to over 2,000 people. A national company in the 90s, Lifetime is now a global organization with dealerships in 12 countries, distributors in 50 countries and manufacturing plants in China, Hong Kong and the United States. Lifetime manufactures more than one million basketball hoops each year and more than 2.8 million tabletops each year. With such incredible growth, it comes as no surprise that Lifetime’s technology requirements have dramatically changed since the company’s first Progress implementation in the early 90s.

According to Bowden, OpenEdge has been a significant component of Lifetime's infrastructure since 1992 because OpenEdge has continuously met the company's evolving business challenges and goals. Lifetime has expanded globally, and Progress supports Lifetime's business operations worldwide. "Our ERP system is integrated globally, from the United States to Asia and other parts of the world. Progress is so flexible that we have no problem expanding our infrastructure when the business requires it."

HIGH PERFORMANCE AND LOW COST OF OWNERSHIP

As the global market leader, it is critical that Lifetime keeps performance high and costs low. According to Bowden, OpenEdge still offers Lifetime the lowest total cost of ownership versus the competition. Despite their growth, Lifetime does not need a DBA to manage its ERP system. In fact, any work done on the database Bowden does himself because he enjoys working with Progress technology. To be certain that OpenEdge is still the best solution on the market, Bowden periodically conducts market comparisons. After each evaluation he estimates that Lifetime's Progress solution requires 10 times less manpower to manage versus Oracle.

MAXIMUM RELIABILITY

Progress has continued to deliver Lifetime the reliability it needs to effectively manage its business. "It is imperative our business-critical tools are always available to their users. Our Progress system has always had a 99.99% uptime rate. Using Progress means that our business is never paralyzed because of a technology failure."

UNBOUNDED SCALABILITY AND FLEXIBILITY

The scalability and flexibility of Progress has enabled Lifetime to focus on the business rather than technology. "Our daily transaction rate has grown from the hundreds to the tens of thousands. Progress has been able to scale with this growth effortlessly," says Bowden. "Today we have a lean, mean, rock-solid, lightening-fast infrastructure thanks to Progress Software."

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John Bowden
CIO

PROGRESS SOFTWARE

Progress Software Corporation (NASDAQ: PRGS) is a global software company that enables enterprises to be operationally responsive to changing conditions and customer interactions as they occur. Our goal is to enable our customers to capitalize on new opportunities, drive greater efficiencies, and reduce risk. Progress offers a comprehensive portfolio of best-in-class infrastructure software spanning event-driven visibility and real-time response, open integration, data access and integration, and application development and management—all supporting on-premises and SaaS/cloud deployments. Progress maximizes the benefits of operational responsiveness while minimizing IT complexity and total cost of ownership.

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