

E-ONE Improves Efficiency with Cincom CPQ™



Bob Wormser thought that he was retired in 1974. He'd sold his aluminum playset manufacturing company and settled down to live the easy life. But one day, Wormser passed an old fire truck rusting away in a field and thought that if someone made a fire truck out of aluminum, it wouldn't rust. Being an engineer, he went home and built an aluminum fire truck and took it to a trade show. Within a decade, his new company, E-ONE, became the largest manufacturer of fire rescue vehicles in the United States.

Today, E-ONE has more than 23,000 vehicles in operation around the world. They are the industry leader in product innovations, new technologies and exceeding customer expectations—all of which began with its EzDRAW, EzONE, EzWRITER and EzONE2go product configurators, based on Cincom CPQ.

"Cincom really has their finger on the pulse of the customer."

Complex, Customizable Products

The need for such versatile product configurators was born out of the company's increasingly complex product offerings; E-ONE's emergency vehicles can have up to 14,000 customizable features.

"In the past," adds Jonathan Plant, E-ONE's configuration manager, "we would have to pore over each order line by line to confirm that all of the components were not just okay by themselves, but also okay in combination."

Goals:

- Improve the accuracy of orders to build complex, customized fire trucks
- Eliminate waste from manufacturing system
- Reduce the cost of maintaining the system
- Make it easier for customers to order highly customized trucks

Challenges:

- Little buy-in among departments
- Too much time between order receipt and order release
- Customer difficulty in accurately configuring orders for highly customized trucks

Solution: Cincom CPQ

Key Results:

- Improved forecasting: visibility at the time of quote rather than at the time of the order
- Reduced manufacturing costs
- Up to a 51 percent reduction in lead times
- Improved purchasing: less need to expedite parts
- Reduced inventory and improved inventory turns
- Faster response to market demands
- Improved dealer effectiveness
- Seamless integration with legacy systems
- Greater dealer and customer satisfaction
- Order processing time reduced by 41 percent

As a result, E-ONE was challenged with producing accurate quotes and orders that required significant amounts of resources and cost. Orders were accepted without a clear understanding of the details, and products were being built with incomplete information. E-ONE did not have structured processes for product definition and the release of new features. Dealers could “write in” their interpretation of an order, including instructions to the shop floor. This technique made systemic bill of material (BOM) determinations next to impossible.

In an effort to correct these issues, E-ONE replaced its manual process with a vended solution. When the vendor stopped supporting that solution, E-ONE tried to grow its own product-configuration solution using in-house resources. They struggled to provide dealers with the tools needed to supply customers with detailed custom specifications.

Cincom’s Solution

In 2005, E-ONE began implementation of its EzONE product configurator, based on Cincom CPQ. By the end of 2007, all E-ONE products were released into EzONE, resulting in a marked improvement. Now, instead of an error-prone process that took days, customers can order highly customized fire rescue vehicles in minutes.

Capturing Tribal Knowledge

Cincom’s technology allows E-ONE to capture the knowledge of the product as they build it. Their prior configuration product relied a lot on tribal knowledge, which meant their dealers had to be very good fire truck designers. Using Cincom’s solution, they capture the knowledge in the product, and that allows them to push that knowledge into the dealers’ hands, so they don’t necessarily need to know every single thing about a fire truck in order to configure it.

Shortening the Sales Process

Using EzONE, a dealer can now create a new quote and have it available to present to his customer in under 20 minutes—a vast improvement, according to Jonathan Plant. “In the past, that was a pretty long and arduous process that would require possibly days of phone calls back and forth between sales and dealer support,” Plant says. “Now we’ve put it all in one place. If a dealer does need support, that’s available in EzONE as well. The Cincom technology has really enabled us to consolidate the process and shorten the turnaround time for orders.”

Plant and E-ONE product manager, Joe Hedges, worked together to load the product configurator with the rules and options needed to build E-ONE’s fire engines.

Developing Highly Customized Quotes

“With the Cincom technology,” Hedges says, “we were able to develop a quoting tool that we could populate with thousands of options and hundreds of rules, allowing the dealer to develop a highly customized quote for a wide variety of products we offer.”

Plant adds, “The Cincom technology that we use is an advanced application. There are complex rule structures and lots of information that has to be maintained and run in a timely manner.” However, the way that the application is put together makes it easy for non-technical users to learn and get the end result that they need. “The Cincom technology has made all of that much easier for us.”

Working with Cincom

Cincom’s professionals worked closely with E-ONE’s team in the creation of EzONE. Beginning with the product definition stage, Cincom helped guide the project to successful completion.

Defining the Product

The critical linchpin to product development is product definition. The product needs to be set up with a good foundation of product definition in order to make it successful. The Cincom team helped E-ONE with that.

Plant says, “One of the great things about the Cincom technology is that there are so many paths you can move through to reach your end goal. So we had to determine what the correct path was for us, and the Cincom team really made that a much easier experience. They came in, analyzed our needs and really became a part of our team in helping us to figure out the right path.”

Laying the Groundwork

Plant says that product configuration management was a new concept for E-ONE, and Cincom helped them lay the groundwork for the EzONE solution. “Many of the aspects that Cincom helped us with still hold true today,” says Plant. “They were instrumental in helping us get to where we are—not just in the beginning, but on an ongoing basis.”

Easy Integration

Cincom's professionals even made the integration of the new system into the legacy software easy. "Every company has a suite of software that they use, and leveraging in or shoehorning in another suite of software can be difficult," Plant says. "With the Cincom technology, that wasn't a problem. We were able to feed our ERP system, our reporting system and our financial systems. It all meshed seamlessly, and again, Cincom was wonderful in helping us figure out those touch points."

After the implementation was completed and EzONE was live, it was the Cincom Support team's turn to shine. "In the rare occasion that we do have an issue, they're right there," Plant says. "They're always available by phone or email, they always get back to us and they stay on top of the issue like it was their own."

Making E-ONE Successful

The benefits of implementing Cincom's technology have been extremely noticeable. For one thing, it greatly contributed to order processing and manufacturing efficiency.

Turning the Company Around

Plant ticks off the ways that Cincom's solution helped turn the company around. "Using the Cincom technology, we can:

- Time our release of the product with the release of the configuration for that product, so that our dealers can order them when they're available, immediately.
- Rapidly see what's out there and react to the changes that need to be made.
- Capture the knowledge of the product as we build it and push that knowledge into the dealers' hands.
- Improve the timeliness of bid reviews and the accuracy of orders as they come in."

"Being able to leverage the Cincom technology has put us in a strategically well-placed position."

– Jonathan Plant, Configuration Manager, E-ONE

Recruiting New Dealers

E-ONE uses EzONE as a selling tool and a recruitment tool for new dealers. According to Plant, "It's a very powerful tool that allows the dealer to get information out of E-ONE without phone calls. They can get detailed specifications on customized products that they're developing for customers."

E-ONE recently recruited a new dealer from a competitor, and on his first visit to the company, they gave him a detailed review of the EzONE quote-to-order application. "He was blown away," Plant says. "The amount of information he could get, the amount of configurations that he could design and develop quickly and the amount of illustrations and drawings he could provide to the customer in a short amount of time really blew him away. He saw it as a competitive advantage in his market."

"Without the Cincom technology," Plant says, "frankly, we wouldn't be able to manage the front-end business the way we do today. It enables our channel to sell our trucks, to get information to the customers and to get the orders in the door."

"One of the core features of the Cincom technology," Plant says, "is the rules-based engine. It allows us to be more confident in knowing that what we're offering to our dealers and our customers is absolutely a great product that can be built as specified. It adds another layer of protection for us and for our customers, knowing that the rules will be accurate and what we'll end up with is a buildable configuration."

Cincom's solution also allows E-ONE to make rapid changes to its sales offerings. Plant says changes can be pushed out to the sales channel in just a few minutes. "So we know that we constantly have the most current information for our dealers, and that's a positive thing for sales."

The Future

So would E-ONE work with Cincom again on future projects? Actually, they already are.

“Recently, we’ve been talking to the Cincom team about what our next steps are,” says Plant. “We have a lot of good ideas of where we can take this. We’re definitely not capped out.”

About Cincom

Since 1968, Cincom has empowered partners and thousands of clients worldwide to outperform their competition by providing ways to increase their revenue, control cost, minimize risk and achieve rapid ROI.

For more information, please visit: www.cincom.com.



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