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Whiting Door Sees Big Improvement Handling Orders for Custom Products

In 1953, T. C. Whiting developed the first practical roll-up door for trucks and trailers and founded what is now Whiting Door Manufacturing Corporation in Akron, New York. Today, Whiting is the leading supplier of roll-up doors in the transportation industry. They have also expanded operations to include swing doors and a custom shop that specializes in laminated panel designs. Whiting Door Manufacturing Corp. headquarters are still located in Akron, and the company continues to be led by the Whiting family.

Since introducing the roll-up door to the trucking and transportation industry, Whiting has grown to have several factory locations across the United States, as well as multiple global partners who manufacture under the Whiting nameplate around the globe. Whiting Door Manufacturing Corporation prides itself on manufacturing quality products in the United States.

Situation - Internal changes needed to improve quality, efficiency and responsiveness to requests for quotations, change orders and order processing

Whiting offers both standard and custom designed products. Manufacturing custom products presents challenges such as modified production processes, identifying and qualifying new suppliers, and developing new product designs. In addition, custom products often involve customers modifying their own designs, which can lead to change orders during the quotation phase and even after

orders are placed. Changes to designs during manufacturing can be expensive, time delaying, and disruptive for both customer and manufacturer.



Supervisor Brian Skorupski assembling panels for rail car interiors at Whiting's CLP Division.

Whiting identified the need to improve its quotation, design and order processes in its Custom Laminated Panels (CLP) division to reduce the probability and impact of change orders while still meeting customer expectations and maintaining profit margins. Insyte Consulting and Whiting developed a project scope to meet the following objectives:

- Streamline the process for CLP sales quotations, ordering, and design changes to insure a faster and higher quality response to customers.
- Establish and meet acceptable lead times for new products that are developed in response to customer requests, market opportunities and internal R&D.
- Design and implement a thorough and uniform quotation system that is aligned with the company's manufacturing system and capabilities.
- Improve alignment and coordination of company departments throughout the quotation, order processing, manufacturing, and delivery processes.

Solution - Improving Whole Value Stream: Sales -Quotation -Order

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“...Our work with Insyte Consulting helped to ground our team and gave our key people the tools necessary to achieve realistic goals.”

Alexandria Whiting,
Project Team Leader



Late Winter for the Economy

by Benjamin Rand

This is a tough time of year in WNY. The worst of winter is finally behind us. We start seeing more sunshine, more grass and more temperature readings above 40, even above 50. But as any grizzled WNYer can tell you, we still have plenty of sub-

zero temperatures and late snow storms ahead of us, especially as the lakes thaw.

In my opinion, this is the worst part of our year. It's actually easier from December through February, when there is no hope. We can only hunker down and take what winter gives us. But knowing that makes us resolute and helps us to bear up. Now, as fleeting glimpses of spring begin to appear, we allow ourselves to hope and that makes it all the harder to bear the cold snaps and snow that we still have to weather.

In many respects, this is exactly our economic situation now. The worst of the downturn is clearly behind us. Most critical economic measures have improved significantly from the nadir of 2009. GDP, new manufacturing orders, production, exports and personal spending were all up through year end 2010.

Even unemployment has begun to improve, dropping below 9% in February for the first time in almost 2 years. Certain sectors of the economy have been going strong with performance measures approaching pre-recession levels. We can begin to imagine, even if it is not here yet, a future summer for the economy. Most prognosticators expect continued improvement through 2011 followed by "good" years in 2012 and 2013.

But there are still plenty of squalls and cold snaps to overcome. At the moment, worries about federal and state government deficits, Arab unrest, spiking oil prices and inflation are generating uncertainty nationwide. In WNY, manufacturing activity turned south in February. The ISM Manufacturing Index for WNY fell to 45.6, the lowest reading in a year. Manufacturing job growth has been lower than the national level. One business owner put it well, "this is just like a real

roller coaster ride. I feel most queasy at the end." So what are business owners and presidents to do?

If you agree that the economy is in recovery and summer is coming, there are a number of actions that you can consider as a manufacturing company owner or president. These actions fall into two broad categories: Sales and capacity.

Sales

- **Hire sales staff or bring on distributors/ reps.** If the economy improves, you need to be ready to capture that demand.
- **Increase advertising and promotions.** In an ideal world, you maintained your visibility through the downturn. Don't relax now! Get the word out. Make it easy for buyers to find you and understand what you offer.
- **Be prepared to increase your prices.** Shocking, I know, after years of holding the line. But when demand returns, you will need to consider this. How else will you cover your increasing raw material costs?

Capacity

- **Make process improvements.** This will increase your capacity, and just as importantly it will reduce lead times and improve customer service.
- **Invest in capital equipment, if needed.** Capital equipment placed in service by year end 2011 is eligible for 100% bonus depreciation.
- **Make selective hires.** You will need good people to take advantage of the improving economy. The quality resources that were available early last year are already dwindling. Frankly, you may already be too late in WNY.

In a few months, memories of this winter will have faded away, replaced by spring blooms. Let's hope the same is true of our economic challenges.



Manufacturing Productivity Program Continues in 2011

Good News! National Grid, in collaboration with Insyte Consulting, will continue to offer the Manufacturing Productivity Program grant in 2011. National Grid will provide partial reimbursement for companies who avail themselves of Insyte Consulting's services in selected project areas. To qualify you must be a manufacturing company (NAICS codes 31-33) and be within National Grid's service area with a current account.

National Grid will reimburse 40%, up to \$15,000, of the com-

pany's project cost paid to Insyte Consulting for productivity projects like Lean Manufacturing and Lean Six Sigma (includes green or black belt training). For projects that focus on top line growth, including Marketing or Eureka Winning Ways, the maximum reimbursement is also \$15,000 but at a 50% reimbursement rate. The real incentive is for companies that elect to do both types of projects.

These are reimbursed at 60% with a maximum reimbursement of \$40,000.

Twenty-seven local companies have applied and been approved for over \$480,000 in grant dollars with an average project reimbursement of 57% since the program was introduced in

2009. This program has enabled many of these companies to implement growth strategies and improve competitiveness during difficult economic times.

The process improvement and website enhancement project at Whiting Door Manufacturing Corporation that is featured in this newsletter is a great example of a project that received funding from National Grid.

How difficult is it to access this funding? Actually, it's quite

easy. Insyte Consulting helps coordinate the grant submission. Provide some basic information to your Insyte Business Development Manager and he will quickly prepare and submit the application to National Grid for approval. Approval typically takes about six weeks. To date this process has resulted in all applications submitted from Western New York gaining approval by National Grid.

27 Local Companies Received >\$480,000 in National Grid Approved Funding from 2009 - 2010

"This program has become one of National Grid's most popular economic development initiatives. Through our partnership with Insyte Consulting and the other Regional Technology Development Centers, we are happy to be helping so many manufacturing companies remain and grow in upstate New York."

Arthur Hamlin, Director of Economic Development,
National Grid

Since the available funds are limited and projects must be completed by the end of 2011, early application submittal is encouraged. If this looks like an opportunity that could benefit your business, please call Insyte Consulting today at 716.636.3626 to discuss the program in greater detail. ❖

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Processing - Production

Whiting assembled a 10-person cross-functional team that included key personnel from sales, engineering, purchasing, logistics, information technology, operations, human resources and executive management. Team members were located in two separate buildings and some had not previously collaborated on such a broad cross-functional project. Consequently, there was some initial skepticism within the group.

The emerging team began by jointly developing Current State Maps of the Quote Development and Order Fulfillment processes for both existing and new

products. This map development helped the team members understand the "big picture" and to appreciate each others' functions, roles and responsibilities. The group then set about to identify, prioritize and implement a long list of opportunities to improve these processes.

These opportunities were distilled into a handful of pivotal, high impact goals and related action items. The Insyte consultant worked with Alexandria Whiting, the project's team leader, to develop a system to expedite completion of action items by team members between team meetings. The team met regularly to report progress, share improvements, and to resolve issues. As the project proceeded and improvements were successfully made, the group not only

became more comfortable working together, but also developed an increased momentum for executing change, and confidence in making progress on the project.

As improvements were put into place, the Whiting team developed written procedures to clarify and document the processes and activities. This ensured consistent and standardized use of the new procedures, as well as a clear and cohesive understanding of each team member's individual roles and responsibilities. The team also developed templates, checklists and other aids to improve consistency, quality and efficiency. One impressive improvement was the

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Insyte Launches eLearning by Thomas Quinn

Are you looking for a tool that will help improve the efficiency & effectiveness of communication and training within your company?

Are your "experts" continually saddled with training new employees or worse yet, are they the only individuals capable of performing certain tasks?

You may have heard of eLearning – a solution that solves many of the challenges associated with the above mentioned problems. Insyte Consulting has built the necessary infrastructure and developed the tools to provide Western New York companies with a cost-effective way to access eLearning content.

Innovative Solution with a Dramatic Business Impact

eLearning encompasses a variety of training and information sharing tools that can be accessed by any networked device, at any time, via the internet. These tools can include generic training material as well as company-specific information. They can be used to orient new employees to the company, train them on specific tasks, or communicate critical company information.

eLearning modules can be narrated presentations of training material, detailed work instructions, company policies, solutions to quality problems, as well as many other applications. To improve their effectiveness, these modules can include company-specific videos or photos. Unlike printed training material, eLearning modules are presented in an interactive and engaging manner to enhance comprehension and encourage future use. These modules can conclude with interactive quizzes and exercises.

Access to the modules is managed by your training administrator, is password protected, and is accessible via your office network or from home. Imagine sitting at home in your favorite LazyBoy getting your annual safety training when it's convenient to your schedule. As a self-professed couch potato, this speaks my language. Having also managed self-professed couch potatoes, it is nice to know that I can also validate the comprehension of training performed outside the office based on interactive quiz results. In one minute a training administrator can provide a user access to the eLearning

library. When a Trainee completes any module, an email is sent to the administrator stating when the training was completed and provides details regarding the user's quiz score.

HR can provide a new hire access to the New Employee Orientation module allowing management to be notified (before new hires arrive) that they have completed the orienta-

tion! Standardization ensures that all desired content is presented professionally.

How will eLearning help your company most?

Consider the following:

Is your company's true potential not being realized because you thought company-wide training was too expensive?

Could standardization and

increased training help with some of your more challenging processes?

Are you providing required regulatory training at the appropriate intervals?

Access to Insyte's existing library of modules, combined with unique content created by your experts, can immediately relieve key managers from repetitive training and communication tasks. Employees receive more frequent, higher-quality presentations of standardized procedures and desired best practices. Think of how great it would be to show an auditor (OSHA, FDA, ISO) a consolidated log file of all user training results including test scores. New modules can quickly be generated encompassing changes made in response to a quality finding. This library provides all employees access to this new module. All of this can be accomplished while spending less money than you think.

If you are curious and want to learn more, we can provide you with access to some example modules, demonstrate their potential and discuss more of the capabilities associated with an eLearning library. Contact us at 716.636.3626 for more information.

Thomas Quinn, Insyte Information Technology consultant, has over 21 years of experience successfully implementing improvements in transactional and service (office) environments. ❖



Emerging Markets are Key to Long-Term Growth

by Sonny Naru, International Trade Consultant, World Trade Center Buffalo Niagara

How is New York State doing in today's global economy? Three important questions can provide the answer: 1) How much are we exporting? 2) Where are we exporting to? and 3) Do our exports show an upward trend?

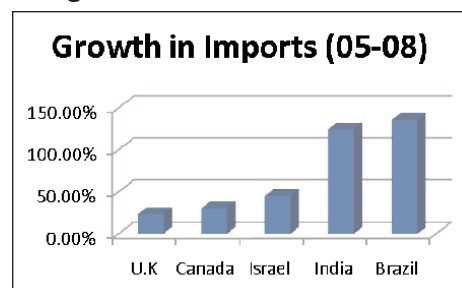
How much are we exporting?

The answer is fairly easy and quite encouraging. According to data published by the U.S. Census Bureau, New York State exported \$58.7 billion worth of goods and services in 2009. Leaving out the recession year of 2009, New York State's total exports increased from \$51.8 billion in 2005 to \$81.3 billion in 2008, an increase of 57%.

Where are we exporting to?

The top five destinations for New York State's exports are Canada, the U.K, Israel, Switzerland and Hong Kong, all of which are mature markets. Excluding Hong Kong and Israel, these markets are not very different from the U.S. market. They offer a predictable business environment, but the potential for rapid and long-term growth is slim. For that, businesses must look toward emerging markets growing at rates of 6%, 7% or 8% per year. Brazil is one such market that IMF forecasts will close the year with a 7.5% growth in GDP and is expected to sustain a growth rate of

over five percent for the next five years. Brazil's imports grew by 135% over the period from 2005 to 2008 (see graph), during which New York State's share of



Brazilian imports declined from 0.61% in 2005 to 0.38% in 2008 (see table). India, another high growth emerging market imported 124% more in 2008 than it did in 2005 while the share of New York State in Indian imports decreased from 0.74% to 0.57% over the same period. From this data, it appears that the answer to "where are we exporting to" is that we have increased our share in the markets that have increased their imports only modestly, while our share in the emerging markets, which have increased their imports dramatically, has decreased.

Do our exports show an upward trend?

Yes, but we can have an even steeper growth trajectory if we pay special attention to the emerging economies.

While mature markets are important, real opportunities for growth are in the markets where demand is only expected to grow for goods that New York State, and specifically Western New York produces. As these emerging markets grow, they remain dependent on imports for their capital goods and high-tech equipment needs, and as their industrial base expands they are expected to buy more of these goods from manufacturers such as those located in Western New York. It is vital for the economic vitality of Western New York that our manufacturers get into markets like Brazil and India and consolidate their positions to claim their stake in these expanding economies. An important factor to consider when doing business in emerging markets is a well thought out market entry strategy and commitment of resources. Each market and each industry vertical has its own dynamics that need to be carefully examined before choosing the appropriate distribution channel and sales strategy.

Insyte Consulting partners with WTCBN to help clients grow beyond their domestic market. Contact Insyte at 716.636.3626 for more information. ❖

\$ Imports by Country

Year	U.K.	Canada	Israel	India	Brazil
2005	515,782,184,720	314,444,418,977	45,032,350,000	140,861,666,915	73,600,375,464
2006	606,428,348,482	350,257,149,910	47,834,446,000	178,212,440,281	91,342,783,548
2007	624,612,713,353	380,619,034,693	56,619,379,000	218,645,293,910	120,621,000,000
2008	634,448,968,313	408,740,455,860	65,170,546,000	315,712,105,580	173,197,000,000
2009	482,893,373,854	321,070,240,778	47,362,724,000	266,401,552,907	127,647,000,000
Change in Total Imports (05-08)	23.01%	29.99%	44.72%	124.13%	135.32%
Change in NY's Share of Imports (05-08)	55%	3%	-10%	-21%	-38%

Go from Compliance to High Performance by Sharon Hilts

You've gone through the rigors of making sure your organization is compliant with the piles of OSHA regulations that exist. So then why, oh why, are you still experiencing too many incidents?

Compliance, unfortunately, does not guarantee that your employees will not get injured. It attempts to put minimum standards in place so that blatantly non-safe situations don't exist. That leaves all the not-so-obvious, hazardous situations lurking in your organization just waiting to sneak up and pounce on your employees. Keep this hobgoblin in check by addressing shortfalls in the following areas:

Culture

Analyzing your organization's culture with regard to safety can be very telling. Ask for feedback on the influences of politics, accountability, and communication among other things via questionnaire. You may find, when analyzing results, that your systems are not working as intended. Administratively, you've got all your ducks in a row, but, in practice, folks are complying only on first shift or maybe everyone but management is complying.

System Maturity

A maturity assessment will help you determine the effectiveness of your systems. Rank each system, like Lockout/Tagout, on how well it is working. Be honest with yourself and use a scale from 1 to 5. Soon you will be able to rank your systems from robust to needing improvement. Action items to fix them become easy to prioritize.

System Integration

How is safety incorporated into the different aspects of your business? Is safety included in the mission statement, performance reviews, employee orientation, sales activities? Where are safety considerations missing? Integration can help to enhance the culture and positively impact performance.

Convolution

Ask someone with fresh eyes, who hasn't previously read your safety procedures, how easy they are to understand. Are they confusing, or containing redundant information or irrelevant facts? Lean your systems. Keep your audience in mind and simplify, simplify, simplify. If you have a system that is not producing positive results, eg. behavior audits, then change it or, if not required, eliminate it.

Difficult to Solve Issues

If straightforward compliance is not preventing repetitive incidents from occurring, then pull out the heavy-hitter tools like root cause analysis and other six sigma tools. There's nothing like the DMAIC (Define-Measure-Analyze-Improve-Control) methodology to squash a problem and make sure that it never returns.

Ineffective Training

Is your organization struggling with keeping employees up-to-date on their safety training? Traveling employees, continuous shifts, high production demands, and vacations can all throw monkey wrenches into a beautifully constructed training schedule. Consider options for on-line learning. The training is consistent, testable, and available 24/7 to accommodate each individual's schedule.

For assistance with any of the areas above, contact Insyte Consulting at 716.636.3626.

Sharon Hilts is an Insyte consultant. Her leadership focus on safety improvement has resulted in significantly fewer recordable incidents and corporate awards in OSHA's Safety and Health Achievement Recognition Program (SHARP). ❖

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Whiting Door continued from page 3

development of a detailed computerized quoting system that addressed the many variations in design that affect cost. The collection of improved cost data improved the accuracy of quotes and ensured that all details were accounted for in the purchasing and production process.

Enhancing Whiting's Website for Sales Growth

With an increased confidence in handling more orders with the existing staff, the team asked the Insyte consultant to assist in making improvements to Whiting's website to attract more customer leads. The goals of this portion of the project were (1) to increase the likelihood that Whiting would be found by someone searching



the web for custom panel manufacturers, (2) to quickly convey that Whiting can meet their unique requirements for custom panels, and (3) to lead the viewer to contact Whiting for more information. The driving philosophy was to develop the website as a key marketing tool for engaging persons searching the web for custom panel suppliers.

The team worked to:

- Define Whiting's target audience – identify, understand and prioritize target applications, the top needs of prospective customers and their supplier selection criteria.
- Understand how competitors are marketing themselves.
- Develop a positioning message to differentiate Whiting from the competition and addresses the top needs of the targeted applications.
- Enhance the website's design to incorporate best practice features that encourage visitors to contact the manufacturer.
- Include appropriate keywords to optimize the website's relevance to search engines (SEO – Search Engine Optimization).

Results

Almost a year after project completion, the impact of this project can still be felt at

Whiting. Alexandria Whiting notes, "We have been able to build upon the framework implemented via this project and use the system that we had developed with Insyte as we continue to refine our processes. Our work with Insyte Consulting helped to ground our team and gave our key people the tools necessary to achieve realistic goals."

- Quotation time has decreased by approximately one-third due to enforcement of now documented standard procedures and the overall streamlining of Whiting's quotation system.

- Engineering Change Orders are much less frequent due to thorough analysis of customer specifications during the quotation

stage rather than at the order entry stage.

- The improved quotation system has reduced production startup time by over 50%.
- Customer complaints of non-conforming product and customer returns have been largely eradicated.
- Increased customer satisfaction with Whiting meeting the delivery commitments they initially state. For the past three quarters, Whiting Custom Laminated Panels has ranked in the 98th percentile or higher on Vendor Scorecards for our major customers.
- Increased documentation of customer order information helped to cultivate accountability for each stage of the order process amongst team members.
- The teamwork and communication continues as the Whiting team maintains a higher level of cross functional coordination and operational performance as they identify and make further improvements.

The CLP group has now become a model within the company for the other product groups to emulate. ❖

A portion of the funding for this project was provided by National Grid's Manufacturing Productivity Program.

Project Benefits

- Quotation time decreased by approximately one-third.
- Engineering Change Orders reduced by 50%.
- Production startup time reduced by over 50%.
- Customer complaints of non-conforming product and customer returns largely eradicated.
- Whiting Custom Laminated Panels ranked in the 98th percentile or higher on Vendor Scorecards for major customers.
- Increased accountability for each stage of the order process among team members.
- Improved teamwork and communication.

"Through this project with Insyte Consulting, our quoting process improved tremendously. By focusing on system accessibility and paying attention to detail, we now have a process in place that allows visibility of upcoming orders for all Whiting CLP team members. Most importantly, refining our system enables our sales team to better communicate with customers on almost every portion of their order, from broad issues to specific details."

Ray Hackett,
Division Sales Manager



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