

Kenandy has TentCraft Covered



Michigan manufacturer goes from Dreamforce to ERP in less than a year

On their way to Dreamforce 2016, TentCraft CTO Tony Higham and president Mark Bulloch thought about the future. They had aggressive growth plans for their company, a maker of marketing tents, flags, and other printed experiential marketing elements for some of North America's most well-known brands. But they'd been relying on an ad hoc ERP system cobbled together from Salesforce components. They wondered how this "home-brew" system not only could grow with them but also continue to support their fierce customer-centric focus.

The system lacked accessible and reliable inventory data. Poor visibility into capacity information was also a concern; because it manufactured its tents at its Michigan headquarters, TentCraft had a very rapid turnaround that was a strong competitive advantage. Further, most orders were customized; many were one-offs. "You just don't know how much product is in the system," said Higham. "You don't know if you need people to work a couple hours of overtime or you need to push some jobs out or anything like that."

Higham said costing also was a challenge with the old system. "We are much busier in the warm months of the year. It's hard to be aggressive with off-season incentives for customers when we don't really have a firm grasp of what our cost to produce is."

Finally, TentCraft's siloed accounting application made closing the books an arduous process.

Even given all that, Higham's inclination was to keep cobbling together TentCraft's existing system. He wanted to avoid the long and painful process involved in evaluating and implementing a new ERP system. Then Dreamforce started.

Dreamforce Attended, Problem Solved

Almost right away Higham and Bulloch knew the answer to their needs lay in the cloud. They could avoid canvassing the larger ERP marketplace and save many months right there. When they got a pitch from Kenandy, they knew their needs were covered.

Kenandy's pre-integration with the Salesforce platform was a factor, as was its easy customizability, which reassured Higham they could easily and affordably make changes and additions as needed. "We have a really, really aggressive culture of continuous improvement, really super aggressive, all the time, every day," says Higham. "With a traditional ERP, you're just not going to be able to update and make changes every day the way we can on Salesforce."

TentCraft implemented Kenandy in less than six months, right on schedule. The entire evaluation-to-go-live process took less than a year.

If I was to build a system this is what I would build, but it would take me a whole lot longer than implementing Kenandy.

TONY HIGHAM, CTO, TENTCRAFT

Flexibility + Agility = Growth

Kenandy's customizability lived up to Higham's expectations. "We rearranged a numbering scheme for work orders to make it easier to relate them back to the art records," he cites as an example. "In the more traditional setup that change could easily have taken a week or two. In Kenandy it was just something I could hop in and do in a couple of minutes, no big deal."

Kenandy has brought repeatability and reliability to TentCraft's manufacture of customized orders. "There's a great return on investment from entering custom hardware or custom soft goods into the system," says Higham. "Now they're just part of the standard catalog. If you want to sell one of those, you just quote it out. Nobody has to talk to engineering. It sails right through production. Now selling that product and fabricating it and ordering it and maintaining inventory is the easiest thing in the world, because once it's in the system, it flows very smoothly. That's a huge win for us. It gives us an opportunity to much more naturally grow our product catalog over time. And as we build up that catalog of custom products that we don't have to create again, I think that you'll see a healthy and positive collaboration between the sales and engineering sides of the house."

Collaboration Adds Up

Meanwhile the collaborative nature of Kenandy Financials is already paying dividends.

"Accounting and inventory are definitely the places we're seeing the biggest benefit right off the bat," says Higham. "Things that used to take our comptroller 10 to 14 days now take her one day." The collaborative nature of Kenandy Financials is key; reconciling documents used to be painful—POs, customer invoices, shipping invoices had to be manually transferred into TentCraft's old accounting system—but now all data flows seamlessly into Kenandy.

"Accounting, in Kenandy, is really the bedrock," he says. "Whether it's inventory movement or shipments or prepayments or purchase order receipts or anything like that, it's all just there in accounting. It's very easy for our folks to stay on top of exceptions as they happen and get them tied out and corrected instead of just finding a big pile of problems at the end of the month. It's really enabled them to be far more proactive and productive."



The collaborative nature of Kenandy Financials is key; reconciling documents used to be painful—POs, customer invoices, shipping invoices had to be manually transferred into TentCraft's old accounting system—but now all data flows seamlessly into Kenandy.

Kenandy—Tentpole for the Future

With Kenandy, Higham's excitement over future growth prospects is intense—not just in tents.

"We have data and visibility we've never had before," he says. "Now we actually have a platform to which we could bring some of our best practice systems to bear on an acquisition or to start other companies and really lay the foundation correctly from the beginning with new products. We'll be able to confidently invest in new equipment. We'll be able to manufacture a lot of things domestically that previously we were buying from overseas."

"How high we kick the building is up to us. We now have the foundation that can support it."