



SUCCESS STORY – Consort Express Lines Ltd



Coastal Shipping Leader Implements Epicor ERP to Automate and Optimise Business Operations



Success Highlights

Challenges and Opportunities

- Required a single unified solution that could automate and optimise business operations by integrating all data and processes to support profitable growth

Epicor Solution and Services

- Epicor enterprise resource planning (ERP) is a single, end-to-end solution that incorporates a number of business critical functions including financial, marketing and inventory management capabilities. It also offers in-depth supply chain management, customer relationship management, business intelligence and enterprise performance management functionality

Benefits

- Ability to approve information from anywhere in the world
- Improved planning and budgeting capability
- Ease of integration with existing business applications
- Improved efficiency and staff productivity
- Supports company growth

Company Facts

- Location: Lae Papua New Guinea
- Industry: Distribution
- Number of Employees: 800 employees
- Web site: <http://www.consort.com>



“Ultimately, Epicor has met and in many cases, exceeds our expectations. The solution infiltrates every facet of our business and quite simply put, without it we would not operate effectively. We are confident that it will continue to drive efficiencies within our organisation and ultimately help drive continued growth.”

Graham Anderson, CFO
Consort Express Lines Ltd

Consort Express Lines is the coastal shipping leader in Papua New Guinea. It specialises in basic sea freight and logistics support for a number of industry sectors including the food and drinks industry, as well as, mining. Containers shipped by Consort carry a variety of goods ranging from building supplies including cement, to electrical appliances, food, rice and beverages.

Consort has offices at the three main ports in Papua New Guinea including Lae, where the company is headquartered, Port Moresby and Rabaul. It also operates shipping agencies at these ports, and provides stevedoring services at Port Moresby and Lae ports. With a total fleet of eight containerised vessels, Consort services a total of 14 ports throughout Papua New Guinea, in addition to also operating one weekly service to Townsville in Australia.

Beyond the Lae, Port Moresby and Rabaul ports, Consort works with external shipping agents that manage bookings and coordinate stevedoring services on its behalf. Toll International is Consort’s shipping agent throughout Australia and takes bookings for containers being shipped to and from Australia to Papua New Guinea via Consort vessels.

About Epicor

Epicor is a global leader delivering business software solutions to the manufacturing, distribution, retail, hospitality and services industries. Founded in 1984, Epicor serves 20,000 customers in more than 150 countries, providing solutions in over 30 languages.

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Consort employs over 800 staff throughout its business including:

- Shipping crews (captain, officers, engineers, cook etc)
- Workshop (mechanics and maintenance staff)
- Container tracking control staff
- Stevedores (staff that load and unload containers)
- Shipping agency staff
- Clerical (IT, finance and management and human resources)

Modernising for a Changing World

Given the expansive nature of Consort's business, employing over 800 people across the business, the company wanted to have a more unified approach to how it was operating across a number of business critical functions and throughout its entire supply chain.

Graham Anderson, Chief Financial Officer, Consort Express Lines explained, "We really needed something that could give us better visibility throughout the entire supply-chain, including all business processes we were operating throughout the company in a reliable and secure way. We desperately sought something that could aid automation and subsequently optimise our business operations to drive efficiency. Essentially we wanted something with Business Intelligence capabilities."

Following a fire at the company's head office in March 2001, Consort lost a lot of critical data, as well as important records documenting workflow processes and correspondence with customers, suppliers and staff.

"When I joined the company in August 2001, I realised very quickly that we required a reliable and robust business solution that could improve efficiencies within the organisation including better access and storage of information. A lot of the information we stored previously was paper based and physically filed so we needed to update our systems electronically."

Consort deals with many stakeholders on an ongoing basis. Aside from employees, the company interacts with many third parties including its customers, suppliers, shipping agents, as well as, officials that govern each port, including wharf officers who need to take a record of the cargo being transported on each ship and its planned route. As a result, the company wanted a system that could track payments and financials between them all.

Anderson commented, "We interact with lots of key stakeholders on an ongoing basis. It is imperative that we track and record all correspondence with each to ensure efficient business practices and compliance. We also process

many financial transactions with each, so need to ensure we are managing our accounting procedures and planning for the future all of the time and in the most effective and transparent way."

As a coastal shipping company that operates 8 vessels and owns close to 5,000 containers, Consort also wanted to have greater visibility of its assets. The company employs many mechanics and maintenance staff to service and repair its ships, containers, vehicles and stevedoring equipment including forklifts, tractors and trailers. As a result, the company also owns a lot of equipment including trucks, trailers, forklifts and tractors to support this upkeep and maintenance.

"As a distribution company, we rely on a lot of equipment. Subsequently, we wanted to introduce something that could give us total visibility of all of assets, as well as some way to track each and ensure it is functioning 100% at all times."

"By automating and aligning our critical business processes we hoped we would be able to make better informed business decisions with greater access to critical information in a centralised way."

Choosing a Robust and Flexible Solution

Consort began implementation of Epicor in 2004. The company's decision to opt for the solution was based on a combination of factors including Epicor's reputation as a market leader in the provision of ERP solutions. It was also based on the company's proven track record.

Anderson explained, "I was familiar with Epicor having used some of its software at a previous company I worked for. Having joined Consort following a fire that took place at its offices a few months previously, I decided to look at the Epicor solution in 2003. Epicor offers advanced solutions that are ahead of their time, they are always looking at ways to improve their solutions to meet the specific needs of their customers, which is why I opted for their solution."

Epicor is a single, end-to-end solution that features financial, marketing and inventory management capabilities, as well as in-depth supply chain management, customer relationship management, business intelligence and enterprise performance management functionality.

The Epicor solution automates and optimises business operations by integrating all or the majority of the data and processes of an organisation into a single unified solution in order to maximise profitable growth. Epicor also offers deep industry-specific functionality and can be tailored to any specific industry.

"One of the key reasons we opted for Epicor was its ability to integrate seamlessly with external systems. We use a number of business applications for manifesting cargo, payroll, time management, fleet management and job

costing etc. and Epicor was able to work in conjunction with these without any major upheaval to our business operations.”

Consort was also impressed by the multi faceted nature of the Epicor solution and the fact that they could have greater visibility with one end-to-end solution.

“Epicor has a number of different features and modules embedded, which we have implemented to meet our specific needs as a business such as financial planning and purchase order management, asset management and workflow management. Basically Epicor affords the architecture, which you can then customise to suit your individual needs.”

Results

Consort has enjoyed innumerable benefits since implementing Epicor. Fundamentally, the company now has a better overall view of its entire supply chain including day-to-day operations throughout all business sectors.

Anderson said, “The Epicor solution transcends boundaries. Essentially what I mean by this is that I can now access any piece of information programmed into the solution, from anywhere in the world. I call the Gold Coast in Australia home, so I travel a lot between the two countries. The flexible nature of ERP enables me to work remotely.”

A key benefit Consort has enjoyed since implementing Epicor has been the ability to seamlessly introduce other applications to the end-to-end solution. Epicor acts as a centralised platform, which meets all of the company’s software needs.

“A very important application we use is called DocLink, which connects with Epicor’s software flawlessly. DocLink acts as an enhancement of Epicor’s Purchase Order Manager (POM) module and helps us to better store information and manage workflow. We can now store important records such as mortgage contracts, and titles in a reliable and secure way.

“We needed a better way of handling requisitions and raising and tracking purchase orders for specific expenditures. We process a large volume of creditor invoices and wanted a quicker approval system. Together with Epicor POM, DocLink enables us to send through invoices for approval to various regional managers, who can sign them

off electronically from wherever they are. This information is then reviewed and approved by me, which I can do easily from anywhere in the world.”

With greater access to critical financial information, which can be viewed remotely, Epicor’s software also enables the company to make more informed business decisions about specific purchases or investments.

“One of the key factors I attribute to the success of the Epicor solution is that I can access any piece of information if I have one of the following: supplier name, account code, requisition number of PO number. Everything throughout the Epicor solution is interlinked, all information is aligned and this is a core benefit for us.

“By having timely access to this information, I can justify spending and also make better business decisions. For example, I can calculate what shipping routes are more profitable than others because I have a clear history of purchases and return on investment.”

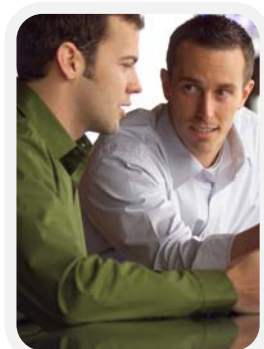
Consort also uses Epicor’s Active Planner feature, which enables them to budget more effectively.

“We can replicate specific templates and then edit accordingly. This helps us determine how much money we need to allocate across each department and ship. We pay wages in different currencies and this system also takes these fluctuations into account. It is an imperative forecasting tool.”

Consort has significantly improved its fixed asset management capabilities through Epicor as well. This module provides complete transparency of all assets.

“This module enables us to enter and track new purchases. It lists all assets under specific categories so the information is collated in an orderly way. It then calculates the depreciation of each asset based on maintenance so we can plan for the purchase of new equipment.”

“Ultimately, Epicor has met and in many case cases, exceeds our expectations. The solution infiltrates every facet of our business and quite simply put, without it we would not operate effectively. We are confident that it will continue to drive efficiencies within our organisation and ultimately help drive continued growth.”



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