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*Marvin Bavcevic, CA
Controller, Atlantic Tube and Steel*

Atlantic Tube & Steel

Frank Cancelli is the founder and president of Atlantic Tube & Steel (AT&S), a manufacturer of automotive and structural steel tubing headquartered in Mississauga, Ontario. "We're a family-run business with approximately 35 employees," says Cancelli. "We operate out of a 150,000-square foot manufacturing and warehouse facility, which, since the implementation of SYSPRO, has become highly automated."

AT&S runs two mills: one makes mechanical tubing, predominantly for the automotive aftermarket; the other manufactures larger-sized structural tubing, used in a host of applications such as conveyor belt rolls, jackposts and trailer hitch tubing. AT&S also operates as a recutting service, to provide some of its customers with an additional value-added component. An ISO 9001 certified manufacturer, Atlantic Tube & Steel guarantees that its products meet rigorous standards, and every bundle of product is subjected to a series of quality tests to verify integrity and quality.

"Over the last 30 years," says Cancelli, "the business has grown increasingly complex on all fronts. To compete effectively we needed to implement an enterprise resource planning (ERP) solution. After researching the alternatives, we chose SYSPRO ERP, because we believed it would create business efficiencies, help us maintain our inventory and volume advantage, and ensure that we conform to our industry's strict quality requirements. Looking back, it's clear that our decision to go with SYSPRO was sound."

AT&S's controller, Marvin Bavcevic, was in charge of the implementation. "Before the transition," says Bavcevic, "we were using a DOS-based program with very limited ability to analyze results. It was a dinosaur, and our management decisions were being made in the absence of sufficient data. We made the decision to go with SYSPRO in August, 2007. In December of the same year we ran SYSPRO in parallel with our old program. On the first of January, 2008, we went live with SYSPRO."

Although Bavcevic is enthusiastic in his praise of SYSPRO ERP, he admits to certain challenges during the implementation. "There were some growing pains in terms of the customizations we asked for," says Bavcevic. "SYSPRO, however, was very accommodating, addressing our concerns and needs on a very timely basis. Even though some of our original intentions may not have been well-communicated, SYSPRO was more than will-

ing to work with us until we arrived at the point where we needed to be."

One of the ERP capabilities that AT&S needed most was product traceability. "Quality, and the perception of quality, are of paramount importance in our industry," says Larry Brandon, AT&S's sales manager. "That's why SYSPRO's Lot Traceability component is a key benefit." Steel, explains Brandon, can be manufactured in many forms using myriad components. "Too much or too little of certain components (carbon, for example) will affect the product's malleability. And since many of our customers need to bend and shape the steel they buy, it must conform precisely to exacting specifications."

If an order of steel does not conform to specification, and if AT&S receives a customer complaint, the company can now use SYSPRO to quickly identify the relevant production run. "With that information, we can take all the rest of that steel out of stock," says Brandon. "That way we avoid sending the wrong product to other customers, which helps us eliminate, or at least minimize, any negative quality perceptions that might arise in the market." Lot traceability also allows AT&S to drill down to the source components of any production run. "That saves us a lot of time. It also lets us go back to our suppliers in a timely fashion if their product doesn't meet our specifications."

Implementing SYSPRO has enabled AT&S to fully automate its production floors. "That allows us to look at the shop floor in terms of reducing man-hours," says Bavcevic. "In addition, with SYSPRO we no longer need our manual production reporting process. In the past, while a mill operator was supposed to be watching the seam, or adjusting the heat source, he would sometimes have his back to the mill while he prepared his reports. These days, the whole production process, from input to output, is all recorded and reported by SYSPRO. Not only does that eliminate a ton of paperwork, it provides us with the ability to get information more efficiently, so we can analyze the data on a timely basis."

For Atlantic Tube & Steel, the transition to SYSPRO has been rewarding. "We've joined the 21st century," says Bavcevic. "In terms of IT, we were barely limping along. Now, with SYSPRO, we're up and sprinting."

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