

# LOAD TRAIL AN EXTENSIVE ERP SOFTWARE SEARCH DELIVERS A COMPANY BUILT FOR THE LONG HAUL

Case Study



**Overview:**

Since its inception in 1996, Load Trail, LLC has offered high quality trailers at very competitive prices. With two divisions and more than 200 employees, Load Trail produces multiple trailer product lines that are “Built for the Long Haul,” including many configurations of single axle and tandem axle trailers, car hauler trailers, bobcat trailers and so much more. With pride in their products and customer service, Load Trail strives to achieve the highest standards in all that it does.

## **Savings include an 85% reduction in time to complete physical inventory and \$120,000 from VIN Generator and Sales Configuration templates**

When it comes to product excellence, Load Trail, LLC strives for the highest level in every trailer that rolls out the door. Specializing in standard and heavy duty automotive trailers and trailer parts for the construction, farming and housing industries (to name a few), Load Trail offers a wide variety of products to the market that people rely on daily to help their businesses succeed. Load Trail takes pride in its high quality trailers and relies on good client relationships to sustain and grow its business.

But as Load Trail, LLC worked to become a nationwide leader in trailer offerings, it began to experience challenges with its enterprise resource planning (ERP) software's capabilities. Load Trail's ERP software, Epicor's Vantage solution, was unreliable, with limited scheduling capabilities. The poor software performance was greatly affecting on time material planning and on time processing, decreasing possible cost savings for Load Trail and hurting valuable customer relationships. Load Trail's ERP software solution lacked what Load Trail needed the most: the functionality necessary to maintain an excellent level of customer service, operational efficiency and increased competitiveness in the market.

The decision to replace an ERP software system is never made lightly, but as the Vantage software continued to perform poorly with no resolution in sight, Load Trail began to seek out a more comprehensive software solution to manage future growth and better serve its customers. Load Trail's leaders stress to their employees that everyone must work with the customers' best interests at heart. So when looking for a new ERP software provider, Load Trail wanted a company that would do the same.

### **Getting to the Heart of It**

Enter Abram Harms, Load Trail's business developer. Part owner of the company, part everything else, Harms has had a hand in nearly every department in the plant, including sales, production and management. Harms's unique vantage point into every aspect of day to day operations made him the perfect candidate to take on Load Trail's new implementation project, as Harms knew exactly what functionality he needed the next ERP software solution to provide.

Harms interviewed an impressive 10 ERP companies in his search for the best. Of the 10, he narrowed it down to just three: Infor, DELMIAworks (formerly IQMS) and Shoptech. From the final three, Harms chose DELMIAworks' single database solution, EnterpriseIQ, because DELMIAworks instilled extreme confidence that it would work hard to solve Load Trail's challenges. Through the dynamic nature of the company and DELMIAworks' willingness to adapt the ERP product to fit specific automotive requirements, Harms knew that he was in good hands.

## **Return on Investment**

- Leveraged better material planning tools, resulting in an 85% decrease in labor
- Empowered the shop floor with an easy|touse system
- Saved time and \$120,000 per year with automated tools like the VIN Generator and Sales Configuration Template
- Increased operational efficiency
- Eliminated excessive data entry during physical inventory review
- Increased overall customer service and improved communication internally and externally

"IQMS was so open to helping us with the problems that we were experiencing and struggling with at the time," said Harms. "There was not a question in my mind that IQMS would help us overcome our challenges."

"The IQMS team understands a lot about production," Harms continued. "When we talked about development and trying to automate some areas, they understood exactly where we were coming from. IQMS really understands the production process and has been an awesome help to our company."

### **Automating Their Way to the Top**

DELMIAworks employs an elite team of developers called the automation group that, among other things, specializes in helping EnterpriseIQ customers automate the menial and tedious tasks that cause errors and take up valuable time. Before signing on, Load Trail had some industry-specific automotive requirements they needed its software solution to provide, specifically a Vehicle Identification Number (VIN) generator application.

After only one conference call with DELMIAworks' automation group to discuss specifications, a VIN Generator module was developed. Rather than manually assigning a formulaic number to an automotive product, the new application calculates the vehicle attribute requirements necessary to be DMV compliant and meet the National Traffic Highway Safety Administration's standards. Eliminating the imprecise process of manually assigning a number made Load Trail more compliant and saved a significant amount of time—what was once a five minute process per work order is now a simple mouse click.

"The VIN Generator automates the process and does so much behind the scenes," said Harms. "It does everything with a single click of a button, which is amazing! IQMS and the automation group have been phenomenal to work with. I remember very clearly that they made everything sound so simple. We wanted something, and we got a lot more than we asked for."

Managing a company that offers maximum product customization to their clients requires Load Trail to effectively coordinate and manage their inventory possibilities, a daily challenge for many companies. EnterpriseIQ's sales configuration templates solved Load Trail's complicated product offering problem, provided ease of use and resulted in major labor cost savings: \$120,000 per year!

Instead of laboriously pre-constructing static Bills of Material (BOMs) for every possible product combination Load Trail offers, individual components were simply uploaded once into the database at implementation. The module's configurable product base allows for multiple scenarios and combinations to be created automatically, depending on the needs of Load Trail's clients. The functionality of the sales configuration templates also resulted in a major reduction in inventory maintenance because Load Trail has to only update 700 part numbers when maintaining part masters, instead of the average 25,000 they were updating before.

"The VIN generator and sales configuration templates are unparalleled. We use them every day and couldn't operate without the two," said Harms. "Our old system offered those programs, but the functionality wasn't integrated. It was not a third party, but more of a build on."

### An Exciting Future Ahead

Load Trail went live with EnterpriseIQ within six months of purchase and quickly saw improvement, even after just a couple of months. They largely appreciate how easy to use and intuitive the system is. Besides the automated tools, some of Load Trail's other favorite features are the system's auto invoicing functionality and shipping capability, like how easy it is to create a pick ticket and convert it to a packing slip. EnterpriseIQ is easy to manage, cost effective and flexible, offering Load Trail the tools they need to get the job done.

"The biggest result I have seen is in the people—how easy the system is to use for the staff, how easy it is to find stuff in the system and how very easy it is to navigate

**"The VIN Generator automates the process and does so much behind the scenes ... it does everything with a single click of a button, which is mazing!"**

— Abram HARMS, Business Developer

for my production floor," said Harms. "EnterpriseIQ has made so many changes in our day to day life. We can better plan our materials and better organize our work orders through the software."

After only three months under their belt, Load Trail was still uncovering all the functionality and possibilities that the EnterpriseIQ system has to offer. For example, Load Trail was pleasantly surprised with EnterpriseIQ's warehouse management (WMS) capacity during a recent physical inventory. Using the EnterpriseIQ tools, a simple scan of an item allowed them to easily reference and audit the entire plant's inventory, saving time and increasing inventory visibility. Their monthly inventory tracking went from 13 employees over two full days to only six employees for five hours, an 85 percent decrease in labor. Load Trail was able to add two extra production days per month to their planning schedule when their inventory time was decreased to only half a day.

Scalable, modular and committed to long term development, DELMIAworks and EnterpriseIQ are ready to grow with Load Trail. With a solid software foundation, Load Trail is already looking to the future and striving to give its clients more options to choose from, working with DELMIAworks to bring Load Trail to the next level.

"The system has been very successful, and we are thrilled about the success we are having," said Harms. "I see a system that works, and that's exciting."

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