



## Epicor Success Story

# BluePrint Automation, Inc.

### Company Facts

- ▶ Location: Colonial Heights, Virginia
- ▶ Industry: Manufacturing
- ▶ Number of Employees: 80

### Success Highlights

#### Challenges

- ▶ Needed an enterprise package that could grow with the company, was fully integrated with the capability to span all departments

#### Solution

- ▶ Epicor® Vantage®
- ▶ Integrated manufacturing enterprise with the flexibility to suit a custom manufacturing environment

#### Benefits

- ▶ Eliminated duplicate payment errors
- ▶ Streamlined workflow between departments
- ▶ Reduced shop floor errors

#### Return on Investment

- ▶ Revenues increased 30% last two years
- ▶ Accuracy of labor reporting improved



"Our company has seen revenues rise 30% each of the last two years, and Vantage has played an important role in that growth," says Mike Bailey, information manager with BluePrint Automation, Colonial Heights, Virginia.

BluePrint is a world leader in designing, manufacturing, and integrating automated end-of-line packaging systems for a wide variety of flexible and rigid products. Customers include large Fortune 500 companies as well as small, privately owned local manufacturers.

BluePrint integrates their technology with other machinery, such as bagging systems, to provide a total packaging solution. "Our machinery includes robotic pick-and-place systems, gravity case packers for horizontal packing and side-load case packers for vertical packing," explains Bailey.

The snack/frozen food industry accounts for approximately 60% of BluePrint's business, with the remaining 40% divided among the pet care, dairy, personal health care, and confectionary industries.

Bailey explains the origins of the company's unusual name. "Our founder, Bob Prakken, named the company to reflect his initial focus on engineering and system design. Later on he decided to start making the packaging equipment, too."



Together with its sister company in Woerden, The Netherlands, BluePrint has more than 1,500 installations around the world. For BluePrint's customers, the benefits of automated packaging equipment include increased production capacity, decreased workforce requirements and reduced product breakage. The U.S. operation in Virginia was founded in 1987 and serves North and South America. "We moved into our new, 40,000-square-foot facility in January 1998," adds Bailey. "It's wonderful to have everything under one roof."

In addition to designing and building systems, Bailey says BluePrint is increasingly involved in system integration. "We have the expertise in PLC programming to integrate our packaging machinery with other factory equipment," explains Bailey. "Right now integration services are a small percentage of our revenue, but they are growing."

When BluePrint was selecting manufacturing software, Bailey says Vantage met three important selection criteria. "First, we wanted a package that could grow with us. Second, we liked its full corporate integration, how Vantage could span all our departments," recalls Bailey. "And finally, we felt Vantage offered a very good value."

During the implementation, Bailey describes his role as "Vantage champion." "This was my first exposure to Vantage, and it was very refreshing to use a system with a very well designed, intuitive interface. The interface made training, procedure definition and control much easier—it was a very well structured program."

"Vantage is a tremendous improvement over our old paperbased system," notes Bailey. For example, with accounts payable, BluePrint's old system required a manual sign-off on each invoice. Bailey says invoices tended to pile up, and when signing 200 invoices it was easy for duplicate payments to be

approved. With Vantage, purchase orders are automatically matched against the materials received, eliminating this risk.

The accuracy of BluePrint's labor reporting has also improved. Under their old system, shop employees clocked their hours using an independent, nonintegrated bar code system. "If an old bar code was still around, an employee could accidentally clock in a job that had already shipped six months earlier," remembers Bailey, who adds that the integrated Vantage system does not allow these types of mistakes.

In addition to reducing errors, Bailey says the structure of Vantage has helped organize different functional areas within the company. "Before Vantage, the work flow between areas was much slower," says Bailey. "With a common database, we've eliminated much of the double entries and repetitive work."

For example, all the information needed by the engineering department is now in one place. "With multiple engineers working on a project, our old paper-based system made it difficult to know which bill of materials was the most recent," explains Bailey.

"Having everything tied together makes it all much easier. The information is cleaner for the purchasing department and assembly floor." Adds Bailey, "The shop area now knows exactly what the customer wants."

Having a clean bill of materials file in Vantage makes it easier for BluePrint's parts and service department to locate the proper part and send it out in a timely fashion. "We no longer have to guess or ask the customer to describe the part they need," says Bailey.

In the future, Bailey believes this bill of materials database will significantly improve the productivity of BluePrint's engineering department. "We'll be able to easily re-generate our designs for future orders, so we're not re-doing work."

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**"We chose Vantage because it could grow with us, we liked the full corporate integration and we felt it was a very good value for the price. Vantage allows much more flexibility than the traditional inventory-based ERP systems. It can easily be customized to suit almost any need you have."**

Mike Bailey, Information Manager, BluePrint Automation, Inc.

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BluePrint uses a Microsoft® Windows® NT network, including Terminal Server Edition for remote access. Two BluePrint engineers who live in Nevada and Washington access Vantage information through the Internet using MetaFrame® from CITRIX®.

"It's a very cost-effective long-distance solution," says Bailey. "We don't have to pay for much bandwidth, and these engineers say it's almost like a direct connection to our LAN."

Bailey says the customer service with Vantage has been very good, and he appreciates how well Epicor listens to its existing customer base. "Our user group was recently asked to complete a product survey, and I know Epicor values user feedback and suggestions," comments Bailey.

"Our new chief financial officer came from a company that ran a tier-one ERP package, and he said Vantage was very refreshing," adds Bailey.

"After just a week, he said he already had a good grasp of Vantage because it's very intuitive, where the other package was cryptic."

In the packaging industry, Bailey says BluePrint is seeing a growing demand for flexible machines that can accommodate various package sizes. Bailey also sees the importance of using manufacturing software that allows for flexibility.

"I've talked to a number of custom manufacturers or job shops about Vantage," comments Bailey. "If they're using more traditional, inventory-based ERP systems, they are usually frustrated by the software's 'cookie cutter' approach that doesn't offer them enough flexibility."

"Those other systems are designed for companies that produce 10,000 identical widgets, stock them on a shelf, and then ship them out," notes Bailey.

"The flexibility of Vantage makes it better suited for the company that makes one widget, followed by a widget with a twist and then a widget with something else."

"Vantage allows much more flexibility than the traditional inventory-based ERP systems. For example, the job management module can be independent from the master bill of materials, and adapted for use on the shop floor or in other areas."

Concludes Bailey, "Vantage can easily be customized to suit almost any need you have."

## About Epicor

Epicor Software Corporation drives business growth. We provide flexible, industry-specific software that is designed around the needs of our manufacturing, distribution, retail, and service industry customers. More than 40 years of experience with our customers' unique business processes and operational requirements is built into every solution—in the cloud, hosted, or on premises. With a deep understanding of your industry, Epicor solutions spur growth while managing complexity. The result is powerful solutions that free your resources so you can grow your business. For more information, [connect with Epicor](#) or visit [www.epicor.com](http://www.epicor.com).



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