

Case Study: Sundowner Trailer



How we transformed their business:

- **Reduced day-long transaction reporting process to seconds**
- **Implemented in four months**

“Our ERP system was too cumbersome to take to the shop floor level. Synchrono has reduced our production reporting to a point and a couple of clicks.”

*Jim Willingham,
Controller*

Trailer Manufacturer Expects Big Returns After Speedy Implementation

Software implementations always take longer than expected, right? That’s what the owners at Sundowner Trailer believed. So when Synchrono was implemented in roughly a third of the expected time, Sundowner executives were pleasantly surprised.

“Going into the project, we thought there was no way on earth we could implement in four months,” said Jim Willingham, controller. “Our owners were expecting implementation to take eight to twelve months. The process went very smoothly. The Synchrono team showed us what we needed to do and kept us focused on what was happening. We were able to get the software into the hands of the shop floor guys right around four months.” Sundowner Trailer went live at the end of August 2004.

Sundowner Trailer, based in Coleman, Oklahoma, is a manufacturer and world leader in the production of safe convenient trailers. They sell and service the trailers through a nationwide distributor network, primarily in North America.

The challenge: reconcile completion dates and control excess inventory

In fall 2003, the company began searching for a new manufacturing operating solution. “We needed to shore up our completion dates,” Willingham said. “We also had a lot of excess inventory. We needed to know where that inventory was, where it was going and if we needed all of it sitting around. Our enterprise resource planning (ERP) system was just too cumbersome to work with in terms of managing our operations.”



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Workflow simplification

The shop floor staff was expected to write down information such as how material was used and what was produced, then pass that information to a few people responsible for entering the data into the ERP system.

“The guys working on the trailers just had to write down a trailer number, but the subassembly guys were expected to record a lot more information,” Willingham said. “It got to the point where our ERP system was so overwhelming and providing such little value to us, that they just didn’t do it. Much of our operational and production information needed to manage and run the business simply went unreported. And, finding a trailer in our ERP system was a nightmare – it simply wasn’t possible.”

Sundowner Trailer now has 18 computers strategically placed at control points throughout the plant. Transaction reporting that used to take one day to complete takes about 20 seconds today.

“With Synchrono, we are quickly able to capture the operational information we need, allowing us to make the correct decisions 100% of the time,” Willingham said. “It’s been easy to teach the guys on the shop floor. We are analyzing the real-time information that Synchrono gives us – something that we never had before – and realize that we’ve gotten more efficient already. Synchrono is also pointing out that we’re building too much to stock and is enabling us to move to a true pull-based process of make-to-order. This will help us reduce and eliminate this stock in the near future.”