FORTIFYING A DESIGN LEGACY THROUGH DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION

ARTISTIC TILE

CHALLENGE

An aging, highly-customized legacy ERP and combination of e-mails, spreadsheets and manual processes presented a data threat to the legacy of the family-run distributor of luxury tile and stone.

SOLUTION

Guided by the technology experts at Net at Work, Artistic Tile selected, implemented and configured a Next-Generation ERP to digitally transform operations for its 175 users.

RESULTS

The "future-proofed" Artistic Tile is well positioned to service the demands of its refined customer base, and is expected to surpass last year's record-breaking revenues. Its warehouse employees, as active users of the system, are kept informed, involved and empowered, which has led to internal advancement. Artistic Tile gained the ability to quickly react to order fulfillment, positively impacting the customer experience.

Sometimes you just know. You can tell when you see or touch something clearly unique and exceptional. That's the feeling Artistic Tile invokes in its sophisticated clientele as they peruse one of the company's nine nationwide showrooms, its vast dealer and retailer network or shop its online site in pursuit of the most beautiful tile to grace homes, hotels and other modern spaces.

The Secaucus, NJ-based company sources, designs, finishes and distributes luxury tile and stone around the world — taking creative inspiration from nature, antiquities, and even everyday objects. While the family-owned and operated company is rich with generational traditions and pride, the Artistic Tile legacy was at risk. Its dated business software technology was posing data concerns and requiring daily server resets.

WRITING ON THE [TILED] WALL

Michael Epstein, Artistic Tile's Chief Marketing Officer, explains, "We were operating on an antiquated system that was no longer being actively developed, and which the development community had lost interest in. It was becoming more and more expensive to maintain, and it was significantly inflexible and difficult to extend. We need a more flexible, stable system – one we could iterate upon, and which wouldn't leave a single vendor holding the keys to our business. To top it off, Artistic Tile's eCommerce website was running on a platform about to become obsolete."

Artistic Tile Chief Executive Officer Joshua Levinson knew exactly how the company had reached this juncture. "We had continued to upgrade our legacy ERP software through numerous versions over the years," he recalls. "Ultimately, we ended up with a highly-customized version of a stagnant, 30-year-old software system. Every time there was a new release, we had to have a programmer re-write customizations to a system that lacked new functional advancements. It was no longer worth the upgrade just to maintain data stability. We knew we needed to make a bold, strategic move. That's when we contacted Net at Work."

"Sales hit an all-time high in 2021 and we've already surpassed that volume this year. If we had waited to update our technology, I'm not sure the news would be so good."

PERFECT PAIRING

A technology consultancy to small-to-mid-sized (SMB) organizations throughout North America, Net at Work serves as a digital transformation strategist, guiding leaders through 360-degree business assessments, IT governance and operations management through software selection, implementation and vendor management.

After many years of looking under the hood of various ERP systems, Artistic Tile engaged with Net at Work to perform a business health assessment. "They recommended that we move to the cloud," recalls Levinson. "We took some time to continue exploring our options, including other cloud based systems, but ultimately decided to implement a cloud-based ERP with Net at Work as our partner. Now we all wish we would have made the move sooner since it's been so successful."

Through the Net at Work business health assessment, Artistic Tile leadership was able to vet multiple ERP solutions based on their strategic priorities and business environment. "The solution we selected is the de facto standard in the marketplace, with a large ecosystem, active development, and a community that ensures it will continue to be developed into the foreseeable future," says Epstein. "It is highly extensible, and highly configurable. We explored working directly with the vendor's team to implement their software, but realized after a few discussions that the out-of-the-box implementation they offered would not address the deeper customizations we required. Net at Work was able to provide the implementation expertise to ensure we covered those bases, and launched successfully."

Epstein and Levinson saw value in working with a technology specialist, a firm with broad resources and experience with SMBs. "With our old system, we were tied to the one guy who wrote our customizations," says Epstein. "This time, we wanted a larger, established company that could really help direct our transformation. Net at Work is that partner for us."

Artistic Tile went all in, embracing the new solution's extensive capabilities from the back office to its warehouses, retail stores, and production floors. "Our teams were committed to making this work, and Net at Work did a fabulous job executing the implementation," says Levinson. "They learned our business and designed a solution that supports every aspect of our operation."

A FLEXIBLE DESIGN

Artistic Tile was initially concerned that their unique business model — one that had previously required extensive customization to support — would not fit within the new ERP. While many of its customizations were no longer necessary due to the native functionality of the solution, the consulting experts at Net at Work were able to configure the software to accommodate Artistic Tile's exclusive business processes.

"We dreaded the first scheduled software update," Levinson recalls. "Honestly, I was stressed about it. But our Net at Work consultant talked me off the ledge, reassuring me it would be just fine. I was out of town on the weekend of the update and — it went perfectly! To me this is one of the most amazing things about the product. We can adapt it to how we do business, yet keep running the most current version. It's outstanding."

True cloud ERP platforms use a unified data model in which the entire system and its elements are built on a single source of code. The modern platform makes configurations and add-ons more secure and simplified. And, as Artistic Tile has discovered, its configured workflows remain intact after software updates.

THE SIMPLICITY EFFECT

The family ownership division of Artistic Tile previously had the business operating more like several smaller companies, requiring large volumes of regular intercompany transactions. The company's switch to a modern, cloud-based ERP allowed Artistic Tile to consolidate the entities, eliminating the crushing administrative load of intercompany transfers — while gaining the ability to see a cohesive, comprehensive view of the entire operation.

"We went from a business with multiple bottom lines and complex financials to one, streamlined business with one, solid and healthy bottom line," notes Levinson.

Similar efficiencies are happening on the warehouse floor. Before, when a salesperson wanted to know the status of a customer's order, they'd have to make a phone call and wait for someone to physically check the status. Now, workers update work order statuses in real time. When an order is marked "complete," the software automatically sends an email informing the salesperson.

Net at Work also worked with Artistic Tile to integrate the ERP with Shopify, the company's eCommerce platform and launched a "pay now" option to allow customers to pay their invoices online via credit card. The combination saves staff time, speeds order processing, and accelerates the order-to-cash cycle.

"The changes have been transformational for Artistic Tile," says Levinson. "We used to spend a lot of time checking with the credit card processors to see if a customer had paid for an order. That's no more."

EMPOWERING EMPLOYEES

The company started with 115 users and has grown that count to 175. "We hire new employees as our sales grow, and we've also extended the application to additional users in our warehouse." It's a move that Levinson says makes sense on multiple levels. "It's empowering for the employees to interact with the technology and understand more about our operation. Many have learned so much that they're advancing in their roles within the company."

CLIENT SUCCESS: ARTISTIC TILE

"Net at Work has helped us future-proof the operation. Innovation has always been the driving force behind our products, but our old technology was holding us back. We've successfully combined our traditional business approach with cutting-edge technology."

Walk into Artistic Tile's warehouse today and you'll see large, flat-screen monitors mounted on the wall displaying open work orders, statuses, and due dates from the ERP. It's another way the company is keeping warehouse teams informed, involved, and empowered.

THE DURABILITY TEST

With Net at Work's help and guidance, Artistic Tile changed course and adopted next-generation, high-performance technology and services that deliver stability, agility, and visibility.

"Sales hit an all-time high in 2021 and we've already surpassed that volume this year," says Levinson. "If we had waited to update our technology, I'm not sure the news would be so good."

Epstein agrees. "Net at Work has helped us future-proof the operation," he adds. "Innovation has always been the driving force behind our products, but our old technology was holding us back. We've successfully combined our traditional business approach with cutting-edge technology. It's exciting and rewarding to know that Artistic Tile is well prepared for the growth we expect in the coming years."

ABOUT NET AT WORK

Founded in 1996, Net at Work is a leading technology advisor to thousands of small-to-medium sized businesses throughout North America. The award-winning consultancy offers a rich portfolio of technology, expertise, and services to help organizations derive value from the transformative effects of technology. To start unleashing the power of your business, visit www.NetatWork.com.

CONNECT WITH US

For more information about how your organization can be best supported through the transformative effects of this Next Generation ERP technology, connect with an expert at Net at Work today: 1-800-719-3307 | info@NetatWork.com

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