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Betsy England, Manager, Business Systems and Technology, Room & Board Inc.

AT A GLANCE

Company

- Name: Room & Board Inc.
- Location: Minneapolis
- Industry: Retail
- Products and services: Furniture
- Revenue: US\$208 million
- Employees: 620
- Web site:
www.roomandboard.com
- Partner: itelligence (Cincinnati)

Challenges and Opportunities

- Enhance customer experience
- Understand customer better
- Push out business intelligence to associates and managers

Objective

- Upgrade to newest SAP® application and platform

SAP Solutions and Services

- mySAP™ ERP application
- SAP NetWeaver® platform

Implementation Highlights

- 3-month upgrade
- On time

Why SAP

- Corporate commitment to SAP software
- Enterprise service-oriented architecture via SAP NetWeaver
- SAP's vision and commitment to the retail sector

Benefits

- Greater customer satisfaction
- Better business intelligence
- More customer knowledge
- Ability to easily disseminate information to associates and managers who need it
- Platform for enterprise services

Existing Environment

- SAP software for enterprise resource planning

Third-Party Integration

- Database: Oracle
- Hardware: HP
- Operating system: UNIX

ROOM & BOARD

Retailer Deepens Relationships, Understands Customers Better Through SAP® Software Upgrade

Room & Board Inc. helps customers create homes they love. The furniture retailer prides itself on personalized attention to clients – its design associates work one on one with customers, helping them choose and configure the right furniture, furniture combinations, and accessories for their homes and offices. The formula's working – the company has increased revenue from US\$45 million to \$208 million over the past decade.

SAP® enterprise resource planning (ERP) software has been a key part of that success, providing a scalable solution that integrates the sales, ordering, inventory, delivery, and financial reporting processes across the company. The software enabled Room & Board to manage growth while keeping design associates fully informed about everything the customer needed, from design choices to material, item, and configuration availability, order status, and delivery dates.

“We don't talk about the competition as much as we talk about the customer experience,” says Betsy England, manager, business systems and technology, Room & Board. “Anything we can do to get information to our customers makes the whole experience more satisfying. We don't want a design associate saying ‘I've got to wait for the computer; it will take a few minutes.’ SAP software integrates all aspects of our business, so this information is at their fingertips.”

Room & Board uses SAP business software across its operation. Design associates access some 15,000 active articles to develop quotes, write or change orders, create customer records, and track order status. Other personnel use the software for demand planning and purchasing. Warehouse employees receive and pick orders and create deliveries. Finance relies on the business software for accounts payable and sales, cost, and profitability analyses.

Not content to rest on its laurels, Room & Board just upgraded to the mySAP™ ERP application and the SAP NetWeaver® platform to meet its newest challenge – improve the customer

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experience and its own operating efficiency even further. “Our next set of tools to support a better customer experience and more internal productivity will reside on the Web,” England says. “We really needed SAP NetWeaver to help us do that.”

SAP NetWeaver unifies technology components into a single platform to integrate systems running SAP or non-SAP software. It also provides a foundation for enterprise service-oriented architecture.

“We want to use SAP NetWeaver to connect our Web site to mySAP ERP,” England says. “We will use the SAP NetWeaver Portal component to roll out more information to our 400 licensed users and to give them access to the SAP NetWeaver Business Intelligence component. We also want to use enterprise services, internally and with vendors. More and more, these Web services are going to become our solution approach for supporting operational processes.”

Business Intelligence Means a Better Customer Experience

Minneapolis-based Room & Board is already taking advantage of the upgrade, leveraging SAP NetWeaver Business Intelligence to combine data from multiple sources to better understand its customers.

Says England, “Customer information resides in mySAP ERP, on our Web site, and in other touch points with the customer. SAP NetWeaver Business Intelligence is helping us connect the dots to build a unified customer record, so we can better understand and anticipate customer needs to ultimately improve the customer experience.”

That’s what sets Room & Board apart from the competition. “We’re not the typical retailer. We don’t use a point-of-sale system; we’re much more interactive with the customer,” says Sarah Johnson, finance business analyst, Room & Board. “It’s really about building a relationship with the customer. What sets us apart, what’s most important for us, is being able to create that relationship. SAP software allows us to do that – by using information to manage the entire customer experience from start to finish.”

Better information also helps managers manage the business more effectively. “Each store operates like its own little business,” says Johnson. “For example, managers monitor their own cost center reports. SAP NetWeaver Business Intelligence will help us

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drive out more information to the managers. We’ll be able to give them intelligence that they can easily access through portal-based queries and tailored manager cockpits.”

Room & Board completed the upgrade quickly. “It took three months,” says Susan Taets, technology management associate, Room & Board. Lisa De Gross, retail business analyst, Room & Board, says, “Our goal going live was to maintain the business as it was today. We tried not to roll in too much new functionality at first.”

Room & Board is pleased that the SAP enterprise software met its original needs years ago, and that the upgrade will now support the next phase of its business. “It’s encouraging to see that SAP has committed to enterprise service-oriented architecture, because that’s clearly the way things are going,” England says. “SAP is also focusing on its retail solution, and we’re glad to see that as well. SAP is visionary, and we’re pleased we have invested in its products for the long term.”

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