



BUILDING A FRAMEWORK FOR GROWTH
MYSTERY RANCH TAKES A LOAD
OFF WITH CENTRIC PLM



“Our customers are involved in military, firefighting, big-game mountain hunting, mountaineering, and other challenging, potentially dangerous activities. People’s lives can depend on their backpacks’ ability to carry heavy gear and equipment comfortably and efficiently. To make backpacks that meet the high standards of our customers so they can complete their missions, we need the right technology so that our teams can complete their missions effectively too.”

Luke Boswell, director of product at Mystery Ranch, explains that product quality, performance and reliability are critical to satisfy the high expectations and specialized requirements of a diverse customer base. The Montana-based backpack company reached a point where it became impossible to effectively manage product design, development and launch using their legacy PLM solution, spreadsheets and emails.

“We had an older PLM system, but it wasn’t doing everything we wanted,” says Boswell. “In particular, it wasn’t capable of outputting the entirety of a product package. It was very Bill of Materials [BOM] oriented so we had spreadsheet chaos in costing, sourcing, materials and testing data. We have an in-house manufacturing facility in Bozeman, Montana, as well as contract manufacturers in Asia, and we needed a PLM solution with the flexibility to handle the different ways we work with manufacturers.”

Mystery Ranch decided to implement Centric 8 PLM to centralize and streamline product data in order to develop products more efficiently, minimize mistakes, drive innovation and ultimately serve demanding customers more effectively with high-quality products. Today, Bill of Materials accuracy has improved by 30 percent. Costing and pricing spreadsheets are history. And the company has a solid digital foundation that, according to Boswell, allows “infinite room for growth.”

How did Mystery Ranch achieve this digital transformation with Centric PLM?

MISSION TO SUPPORT CUSTOMERS

Mystery Ranch was founded in 2000 by Dana Gleason and Renee Sippel-Baker, who have worked together in backpack design and manufacturing since 1978. Built on a heritage of function, comfort, quality and durability, Mystery Ranch manufactures packs and load carriage systems for military, hunting, wildland fire and mountaineering customers. Mystery Ranch is based in Bozeman, Montana, and is a global brand with domestic and international sales and production, as well as direct-to-consumer and wholesale business models.

COMPLEX BUSINESS STRUCTURE

Mystery Ranch is a growing business that sells to several different professional and consumer markets. Many Mystery Ranch products are dual-sourced in the U.S. and overseas because of specific compliance requirements for U.S. military products, which creates supply chain complexities.

In 2004, Mystery Ranch was approached by the U.S. Navy SEALs to create custom packs, beginning a relationship between Mystery Ranch and the military that shifted the company’s business and design strategy to a direct-sales model for specialized, high-level customers.

As Boswell explains, Mystery Ranch needed a PLM system that could handle a wide variety of product information, effectively track supply chain data and balance different product timelines across the business.

“We have to accommodate fast-paced, quick turnaround product development for the military, where we may have to develop a product from concept to production purchase order issues in 30 days. At the same time, we have a more traditional outdoor consumer goods approach toward seasonal development and long lead-time calendars to commercialize our products and bring them to market. The need to balance these two aspects creates a very complex problem set.

“Our supply chain is complicated, and our legacy PLM system was unable to effectively track raw materials,” he continues. “There was a lot of dynamic



WE HAVE INCREASED BOM ACCURACY BY 30 PERCENT, AND OUR MANUFACTURERS TELL US WE HAVE THE MOST IMPRESSIVE PRODUCT DOCUMENTATION OF ALL THEIR CUSTOMERS. IT WAS ALREADY 90 PERCENT ACCURATE; NOW IT’S 99 PERCENT ACCURATE!



CHALLENGES

- + Managing complex supply chains with dual-sourcing requirements
- + Spreadsheet chaos due to growth and variety of products
- + Legacy PLM solution could only handle BOM data
- + Needed to accommodate different product development timelines
- + Dynamic information lived in static environments

information living in static environments, where it wasn't linked together and couldn't be easily updated.

"We looked for a robust and flexible PLM solution that could help us manage different types of complex product documentation, cut errors that affect product quality and handle data related to raw materials, supply chains and quality testing."

PLM THAT CAN EVOLVE AND GROW

After a selection process in which several PLM vendors were considered, a series of several PLM demos and reference calls with Centric customers, Mystery Ranch selected Centric 8 PLM because of the solution's flexibility, ability to scale and out-of-the-box features. The implementation was completed ahead of schedule in just five months.

"Backpacks are a perfect marriage of soft and hard goods and Centric PLM is designed to manage both of those worlds," says Boswell. "We needed the ability to account for elements such as fit and sizing and the way that an apparel company deals with color and lab dips, but also be able to handle documentation created using CAD solutions and manage tolerance specifications for hard elements that go into our framing systems. Centric does a really good job of tailoring a system that works with these different types of data."

"Centric PLM can accommodate our company's evolution, and allows us infinite room for growth," he continues. "Throughout the implementation, the Centric team has helped us to steer our process toward features that are very well-thought-out in terms of out-of-the-box configuration, while also being very accommodating of our unique operations."

FAST, STREAMLINED, ACCURATE

With Centric 8 PLM, Mystery Ranch experiences a transformation in the way that team members carry out their everyday work. Mystery Ranch manages increasingly complex supply chains, meets rigorous compliance rules, reduces errors that affect product quality and develops products more efficiently, ultimately contributing to business growth, customer loyalty and enhanced competitiveness thanks to Centric PLM.

"The most tangible result is in BOM creation," says Boswell. "With Centric PLM, users no longer have to manually enter each BOM every time they create a new color or style, they just copy and alter BOMs to create new styles, saving enormous amounts of time for our product development team. If a military customer wants a pack based on a previous design with a small modification, we don't have to recreate that whole database of information from scratch. It's great."

Boswell explains, "Centric PLM has a holistic approach to product information that has enabled us to bring everything together and then refine our process. We hold ourselves to a very high standard of quality, and as a result, we create tons of documentation about our patterns, construction details and materials. That information now lives in one place and is tied together, making it much easier to update and saving a lot of time."

"Costing and pricing spreadsheets have also been eliminated," he continues. "The ability to access all product data and documentation in real time reduces errors and is mitigating downstream quality issues. Our manufacturers tell us we have the most impressive product documentation of all their customers. It was already 90 percent accurate; now it's 99 percent accurate!"

RESULTS

- + Time saved in BOM creation, streamlining new style development
- + BOMs at least 30% more accurate
- + Reduction in errors and mitigation of downstream quality issues
- + Product documentation for suppliers is 99% accurate
- + Costing and pricing spreadsheets eliminated

FUTURE ADVENTURES

Mystery Ranch is currently integrating Centric PLM with its Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) solution and plans to add Centric's Field Testing mobile app, which provides an innovative solution for product performance feedback in real time.

"The Field Testing app will be very important to us, especially on the military side, because we have to make user-acceptance samples and get feedback on them," explains Boswell. "We're really excited about closing that loop so that feedback is provided directly in the PLM system."

"We intend to add Centric's quality management and final inspection modules to manage our materials-testing and compliance data," he continues. "We test all of our own materials in house and have built many of our own tests. The ability to document all of that data in a more systematic way using Centric PLM will give our quality team a more integrated experience. When they're going to inspect products on a factory floor, they will be able to reference PLM information live during inspections."

"As a small-to-mid-size company that has seen a lot of growth, the biggest thing for us is setting up a system now that works for us for the next 10 to 15 years and beyond, rather than having to figure out the next thing that's going to help us every couple of years. Centric PLM is a great resource for our growth."





ABOUT MYSTERY RANCH

A product-driven company from the beginning, Mystery Ranch designs packs for the job that needs to get done, for the people committed to doing it, with the best materials available and the most durable construction methods that exist.

ABOUT CENTRIC SOFTWARE

From its headquarters in Silicon Valley, Centric Software provides a Digital Transformation Platform for the most prestigious names in fashion, retail, footwear, luxury, outdoor and consumer goods. Centric's flagship Product Lifecycle Management (PLM) platform, Centric 8, delivers enterprise-class merchandise planning, product development, sourcing, quality and collection management functionality tailored for fast-moving consumer industries. Centric SMB provides innovative PLM technology and key industry learnings for emerging brands. Centric Visual Innovation Platform (VIP) offers a new fully visual and digital experience for collaboration and decision-making and includes the Centric Buying Board to transform internal buying sessions and maximize retail value and the Centric Concept Board for driving creativity and evolving product concepts. All Centric innovations shorten time to market, boost product innovation and reduce costs.

Centric Software is majority-owned by Dassault Systèmes (Euronext Paris: #13065, DSY.PA), the world leader in 3D design software, 3D Digital Mock Up and PLM solutions.

Centric Software has received multiple industry awards and recognition, including being named by Red Herring to its Top 100 Global list in 2013, 2015 and 2016. Centric also received various excellence awards from Frost & Sullivan in 2012, 2016 and 2018.



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