



SOLARSOFT BUSINESS SYSTEMS' SUCCESS DEMONSTRATES VALUE OF AVNET'S COMMITMENT

solarsoft Solarsoft is a turnkey provider of robust and fully integrated enterprise software tailored to the needs of manufacturers, distributors and wholesale businesses. Solarsoft's enterprise resource planning solutions enable companies to increase visibility throughout their operations, enhancing efficiencies and resource optimization.

Solarsoft is headquartered in Richmond Hill, Ontario

Suppliers in verticals ranging from automotive to food processing face increasingly stringent customer demands and industry standards for on-time delivery, order accuracy, traceability and quality. They must possess the agility necessary to react to every change in their customers' businesses, so that every order and every change not only ripples through the four walls of their enterprise, but communicates down the supply chain to all their trading partners as well.

These requirements combine with constant pressure to cut costs and perform financially for stakeholders, challenging organizations to better manage their resources and processes. Such an array of competing pressures continuously redefines the scope and scale of the demands businesses place on their enterprise management systems.

For over 20-years, Avnet partner and IBM Premier Business Partner, Solarsoft Business Systems, has provided its customers with an Enterprise Resource Planning solution, iVP, developed specifically to help them meet the evolving demands of such a top-down, zero-tolerance environment. iVP, which runs exclusively on the IBM System i, provides robust, fully integrated and specialized supply chain functionality out-of-the-box, with no need for 3rd party solutions.

"Many ERP solutions are built around an all-purpose horizontal backbone with universal functionality as relevant to the requirements of the insurance industry as they are to manufacturing," says Paul Craven, Solarsoft's Chief Operating Officer. "In order to achieve any level of industry specificity they require heavy modifications or rely on vertical 'best-of-breed' plug-ins."

Mid-size organizations tend to find this model unwieldy and unjustifiable. Given the integration, maintenance and long-term staffing requirements inherent in managing such systems the long and short-term costs become prohibitive, particularly for companies with lean IT staffs and budgets.

"Functionality is of marginal value if it can't be easily utilized and fully assimilated so deeply into an organization's planning and processes that it becomes an organic part of their business operations," says Craven. "The extent of supply chain control our customers can exercise is a function of the amount and quality of the information they are able to collect, organize, analyze and share internally and externally. Solarsoft iVP allows them to maximize those capabilities."

Avnet a good match for Solarsoft's aggressive marketing style

Wayne Chong, Solarsoft's Marketing Manager, is extremely proactive in managing his company's marketing relationship with Avnet. And in Avnet he's found a partner that reciprocates. "In 2007, we attributed over \$1 million dollars in Solarsoft software and hardware revenue to marketing campaigns that we partnered with Avnet on, and we're on track to exceed that number this year," he says. "You don't get to that level of success without both companies being solidly committed to the partnership and clear on its scale, scope and goals."

Solarsoft and Avnet have tested and perfected an extensive range of marketing tactics over the long duration of the partnership—nearly 20 years. "Avnet allows us to be nimble in our approach to lead generation and business development. They understand that what was effective last time might not work as well now, so they're very open to supporting ideas that haven't been tried before," says Chong, who meets with his Avnet counterpart to outline new business development tactics on a quarter-by-quarter basis.

And according to Chong, Avnet support goes beyond tactics focused solely on near-term lead generation to campaigns with less immediate, yet strategic outcomes in mind. Two years ago, for instance, Solarsoft wanted to increase membership in its Technology Partner program, a program designed to increase new business referrals from systems integrators and IBM System i hardware resellers. Avnet helped



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Solarsoft recruit new technology partners from among the Avnet partner base by executing a direct mail and telemarketing campaign. As a result, Solarsoft added over 30 companies to its roster of technology partners.

Solarsoft is a regular exhibitor at Avnet’s annual partner conference in San Antonio and is a member of the Avnet ISV Advisory Council and ISV Marketing Council. At the 2007 ISV Summit, Solarsoft received recognition from Avnet as a leader in net new IBM System i sales.

The company also leverages Avnet’s technical and educational programs. “They help our sales and technical staff keep up with our IBM hardware and middleware certifications,” says Chong. “Avnet comes on-site for education and training, keeping us up to date on the certifications we need to maintain our Premier Partner status with IBM.”

Solarsoft helps Center Manufacturing control costs and close information gaps

Solarsoft customer, Grand Rapids-based Center Manufacturing, established its roots in 1969 as a mid-sized supplier to the automotive industry, perhaps the single most demanding and supply chain driven industry of all. Now, in addition to fabricating and assembling complex metal assemblies as a tier-one and/or tier-two supplier to Honda, GM, Chrysler and Pacific Car (Kenworth and Peterbilt trucks), the company is increasing its presence as a supplier to the recreational vehicle industry as a tier-one supplier to Harley Davidson, for instance.

“In the automotive industry, we have constant cost pressure. Our customers are demanding tighter and tighter margins, so we need to be very good at controlling costs and really understanding where our money is being spent,” says Chuck Ward, Center Manufacturing’s IT Director. In fact, automotive customers, like Honda, constantly review their suppliers’ cost data, conducting audits as if they were a lender. “They get right into your books. If you’re going to be part of their supply chain, they’re going to have visibility through your financials, so you have to have good information for them and tight control to be able to justify if you’re asking for more money.”

Center Manufacturing’s production lines are dedicated to particular customers, which presents another set of challenges, according to Ward. “Our customers demand quick order turnaround, high order accuracy and on-time delivery, so we have to be integrated directly into their production schedules. As their requirements change ours must change immediately, so we have a high need for robust EDI (Electronic Data Interchange) connections.”

Prior to beginning the Solarsoft iVP implementation in mid-2007, Center Manufacturing relied on a custom-written EDI, sales and labor reporting system bolted on to an enterprise management system purchased in the mid-1980s. “We lacked information, and the information we did have couldn’t be trusted,” says Ward. “Costing information was missing or incomplete and planning was difficult and unreliable.”

Solarsoft iVP provided Center Manufacturing with full integration of all the functionality critical to a supply chain driven supplier, including EDI. Equally important for Ward was that all that functionality was contained in a single product. “(iVP) is comprehensive, integrated and it’s a mature solution,” he says. “We didn’t have to use a 3rd party bolt-on EDI solution; it was all under one umbrella, all one price. We weren’t staring at a whole series of decision points in the future.”

Mr. Ward is taking a phased approach to the iVP implementation, with completion set for mid-2008. The benefits he’s already realized and those he anticipates read like a checklist for a supply-chain driven enterprise. “We have an integrated EDI system that includes all inbound and outbound communication with our customers and we’re controlling our costs and eliminating gaps in our information throughout the enterprise, from inventory to production,” he says. “We’re able to service our customers better and more efficiently.”

