

Samson Ropes in Savings, Efficiency with SYSPRO

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■ The Company

Mention “rope” to the man on the street, and he probably thinks of something a person occasionally needs around the house or campsite. Mention “rope” to Ben Delzell, and he’ll tell you that modern ropes are highly engineered products used in an incredible range of industries, all of which are targeted by Samson: Heavy Marine; Recreational Marine; Fishing; Arborist; Utilities; Construction; Safety; Rescue; Theatrical; Military; and Aerospace. In fact, Samson’s Engineering and R&D staffs work closely with leading fiber manufacturers to explore and assess the properties of new fibers and how these can be applied to the manufacture of new rope products. They also work closely with field service personnel to gauge the needs of customers. In addition, they perform onsite assistance, ranging from product installation to evaluation of product performance and the development of safety standards.

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- Ben Delzell
 MIS Manager

■ The Challenge

Samson, one of the first U.S. rope manufacturers to receive ISO 9001 certification, does extensive testing of fiber and finished rope products to ensure they meet the highest standards. In fact, quality assurance monitoring is a critical aspect of Samson’s operation. It applies to the development of new product as well as the production of existing product lines. Each of Samson’s plants is equipped with certified testing equipment to assess the characteristics of raw materials and finished goods.

■ The Solution

According to Delzell, these same high standards were applied to the selection of SYSPRO as the company ERP system. Samson, a privately owned company, maintains a sizeable sales force that sells product by the spool, foot, pound, reel, and/or tube to major distributors throughout the world. Every order received by Samson is a custom order. The company makes 21,000 different products, and each is available in hundreds of different configurations, ranging from twisted, plaited, braided and varying by diameter, color, length, eyes and thimbles. Samson’s four plants, five warehouses and thirteen sales divisions are tied into the SYSPRO system residing at Samson’s Ferndale headquarters via a wide-area network. The software’s scalability, which runs on an IBM RS/6000 server running AIX, has easily facilitated the tie-in of all Samson locations.



■ AT A GLANCE ■

COMPANY

Samson Rope Technologies

INDUSTRY

Manufacturing





■ The Result

The SYSPRO software has helped Samson speed order entry and turnaround time. The software extracts sales by period by year and examines trends. It then builds a forecast to which Samson adds a 10% buffer. Samson uses these figures to build bulk product, which it can then easily customize for speedy order fulfillment. In fact, Delzell estimates that new orders are now processed in less than 2.5 minutes with order turnaround generally four days to two weeks, an industry standard. Rapid order turnaround is a necessity for Samson, since the company deals in many small orders rather than a few large ones. In fact, the typical Samson order consists of about 1,000 feet of rope.

SYSPRO's ODBC exemplifies the open-architecture nature of the software. ODBC, as well as selected SYSPRO-enabling modules, has enabled Samson to move to e-commerce and is of particular assistance in sales entry and online order tracing. ODBC lets SYSPRO access data in non-SYSRPO programs. This feature is valuable to Samson's marketing and sales processes by allowing access to specific vendor information via a Cold-Fusion-based Web interface. Because both the sales staff and customers are able to collaborate on order status and other related information on-line, Samson is able to build on its reputation for outstanding customer service.

SYSPRO is currently facilitating inventory tracking at Samson's factories and warehouses. The software's bar coding interface enables Samson to utilize a comprehensive bar coding system to track and manage raw materials as well as finished goods. All data is fed directly into the SYSPRO software database with all related system modules updated on a real-time basis. The RF-based bar coding system uses portable, hand-held units which transmit on a 900 MHz frequency. Ultimately, Samson will expand the system to automate processes such as warehouse transfers, raw material issues, order picking and further streamline the entire business process.

What does the future hold for Samson Rope Technologies? One thing is for sure, according to Delzell, the company is "tied" to its SYSPRO ERP software. "Among other benefits, it provides clustered installation capability, the speed, efficiency and ability to delegate data entry to different people in different sites, and it stores data far more cost-effectively than did our System 36," he says. Equally as important, SYSPRO provides the scalability for Samson to add more product lines, more users and, most importantly, to grow and extend customer service. Says Delzell, "In my opinion, SYSPRO is on a level with SAP, the only difference possibly being is that SAP offers a few more options to accommodate its largest users.