

Smead Manufacturing unifies fragmented operations with Dynamics 365

How a connected ERP improved production, finance and customer experience

KEY TAKEAWAYS

1. Growth through acquisition left Smead Manufacturing with fragmented technology platforms.
2. RSM replaced Smead's legacy systems with one Microsoft Dynamics 365 ERP solution.
3. The project created "One Smead" with connected, scalable operations enterprise-wide.

Founded in 1906, Smead Manufacturing has built a legacy of integrity and authenticity after more than 100 years of family ownership and product innovation, from pioneering the first bandless file system to mass-producing more than 2 million wallets for the armed forces during World War II. Today, the company continues to shape how people organize their world with high-quality filing and organization solutions that enhance everyday work and life.

The challenge: Three businesses, three platforms, one operating disconnect

Growth through acquisition left the company fragmented, with each business unit running on its own technology platform.

Specific challenges included:

- Manual, paper-based production reporting that required numerous layers of data entry and review
- Limited visibility into inventory across warehouses, third-party logistics providers and incoming shipments
- Time-consuming, manual invoice entry that slowed processing and limited data accuracy
- Inefficient customer and vendor intake workflows with multiple, hard-to-track approval levels

- Difficulties in tracking engineering changes and overseas goods throughout the business

"Our biggest challenge was that we had three separate businesses on three different platforms, running their business distinctly different," says Brad Beckman, Smead chief operating officer.

"These separate businesses made it harder for us to go to market as one organization or take our products to market for a specific customer," adds Todd Sather, former Smead vice president. "Some of those platforms were antiquated. They were old and needed to be replaced."

The solution: A connected ERP foundation built around how Smead operates

Smead needed more than a technology swap. They needed a unified enterprise resource planning (ERP) platform that could modernize operations, improve production reporting and simplify how they served customers across business units.

RSM collaborated with Smead stakeholders to develop and deliver a multiphase implementation of Microsoft Dynamics 365 Finance and Supply Chain Management, leveraging RSM accelerators and integrations to support sustainable operational transformation.



"The primary goal of Smead's ERP initiative was to create One Smead and have a common ERP platform that would allow their customers who are ordering from multiple business units to do so on a single order," says David McLaughlin, Dynamics 365 industrials leader at RSM.

Key integrations included:

- Microsoft Dynamics 365 Finance and Dynamics 365 Supply Chain Management to unify three business platforms into a common ERP foundation
- A custom workbench within Dynamics 365 to provide a single view of customer order lines, inventory across warehouses, third-party logistics providers and incoming shipments, while enabling inventory reservations against order lines
- The engineering change management module to track item changes and maintenance requests while keeping business areas aligned during complex changes
- The landed cost module to track overseas-sourced goods and maintain oversight throughout the ERP system
- An enhanced production floor execution solution to order raw materials; report on quality orders; access relevant job information around drawings, PDFs and other production instructions; and improve scrap and downtime reporting using programmable logic controller inputs
- RSM's xTracta optical character recognition accelerator to extract invoice data, route it into Dynamics 365 workflows and maintain digital invoice records
- RSM's Advanced Financials accelerator to streamline cash application for high-volume payment processing
- A Power Automate integration between Dynamics 365 and SharePoint to streamline customer and vendor intake workflows across multiple approval levels

Throughout the engagement, the successful work was defined by collaboration, responsiveness and a focus on the business behind the technology.

"RSM was the Microsoft advisor during our request for information and request for proposal processes, and they learned a lot about our business," says Sather. "They built great relationships with the project team and made sure that the solution that we were implementing wasn't just the technology, it was also about how we prepared our resources, how we prepared our business—especially as much of the implementation took place during the COVID-19 pandemic, requiring close collaboration and flexibility."

Key results: Unified operations driving measurable gains

With an effective Dynamics 365 foundation in place, Smead now operates on a common ERP platform that supports business operations within finance, manufacturing and the supply chain.

Integral outcomes include:

- Improved invoice data accuracy through automated data extraction
- Reduced invoice entry time while retaining a digital copy of every invoice in Dynamics 365
- Streamlined cash application supporting up to 10,000 payments per month
- Stronger scrap reporting and improved transparency into production downtime
- Greater control over production sequencing, enabling supervisors to prioritize high-priority jobs
- Connected customer ordering spanning all business units through a single transaction
- Faster customer and vendor intake across layered approval workflows

Looking ahead: A trusted relationship built for long-term growth

For a manufacturer built through acquisition, operating as one company is more than a technology question. It is about giving customers, operators and leaders a single view of the business and streamlined access to the data needed to act on it.

By implementing Dynamics 365 Finance and Supply Chain Management, supported by RSM's industry accelerators, Smead turned three disconnected platforms into a unified ERP solution that supports its brands and products



today while providing a scalable foundation for future growth. The engagement also reinforced a long-standing relationship between Smead and RSM, grounded in trust, stability and shared commitment.

"Relationships, to me, have always been paramount in who I do business with," says Beckman. "I have been on many management teams in many organizations, and the stability of the leadership team over a long period of time is key to the success of any effort. Having that stability from RSM has really helped keep this thing together."

Ready to transform your business? [Contact our team](#) to learn how we help manufacturers use Microsoft Dynamics 365 to unify operations, improve data accuracy and build a scalable model for growth.

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