



## CASE STUDIES

# Wausau Container Corp

New system brings comprehensive upgrades and 360 degree views

## The Query

**Wausau Container Corp, located in Wisconsin, specializes in custom paperboard packaging.**

Wausau Container Corporation was founded in 1993, has 86 employees and operates with two litho, one digital and four flexographic presses producing folding cartons for dairy and other industries. Amy Plier, owner of Wausau Container, wanted a comprehensive update to the business, including a number of customizations. And a system that would be scalable, as Plier expects Wausau to experience a good amount of growth. The ultimate goal was to be able to get more work out the door with the same or fewer staff members. "Since we are solely a folding carton company," Plier explains, "we wanted a system that was focused on that area of the industry."

### PRODUCTS

Paperboard packaging, web-flexography, folding carton

### MACHINES

Two litho, one digital and four flexographic presses

### COMPANY SIZE:

86 employees

### LOCATION:

United States, Wausau, WI Wisconsin

## The challenge

**Wausau lacked many of the modern features they needed to continue growing.**

Wausau had a legacy system based on FoxPro, which was purchased by Microsoft and then discontinued. The system development and maintenance was a side project for the programmer, for whom the project became too time consuming, says Amy Plier, "We had a number of information silos in the business since our homegrown system was not integrated with our accounting system, says Amy Plier. "The lack of integration made it more difficult to manage the business." Wausau also could not track their outsourced work. The workflow at Wausau was burdened with manual processes, including, for example, the creation of purchase orders using MS Word.



“

We knew we were going to need a number of customizations to get the system where we wanted it, and we felt comfortable with their developers and the fast response times we were seeing from them during the due diligence process and beyond.

– Amy Plier

## The solution

**Integrations, necessary customizations and support after the sale.**

Plier explains, "We found that HiFlow was very open to adding any customizations we needed and did so fairly rapidly. Many of these customizations revolve around reporting.

"Our old system had a number of safeguards built in for operators. For example, if an operator selected the wrong paperboard, a warning would pop up so that error could be corrected on the spot. We can now do that with HiFlow. Another big accomplishment was fine tuning the shipping system so our CSRs can quickly see shipping status and report that to customers without having to jump through hoops. We do so many jobs here every day that this type of real-time reporting is critical for us."

"HiFlow's Machine Execution System (MES) module offers real-time data exchange with machines and devices and helps us better manage our warehousing operation. The overall goal is to have a system that gives us a full 360-degree view of our business, allowing us to both react in real time if issues arise, and to better plan our workload, staffing and more."

Another area that has benefited from the new system is the purchasing system. "Before," Plier says, "people created purchase orders using Word documents. Now we are taking advantage of HiFlow's purchasing system. Plus, it integrates with our accounting system, so it makes it easier to monitor overall performance. As far as purchasing materials, we use the system to issue the purchase orders, create the goods receipt and then issue the materials to the warehouse or production floor. So, it has really been streamlined and error-free."

HiFlow has more than 50 staff and typically offers a four hour response time, although the response time is usually much faster. Wausau has access to unlimited support, and the maintenance license fees are flat unless additional modules are added, making cost structures predictable.



“

HiFlow's Machine Execution System (MES) module offers real time data exchange with machines and devices and helps us better manage our warehousing operation. The overall goal is to have a system that gives us a full 360-degree view of our business

– Amy Plier

## Takeaways

**A vendor that customizes, offers fast responses**

Plier explains, "we wanted a system that was focused on that area of the industry. HiFlow was very open to adding any customizations we needed and did so fairly rapidly. Many of these customizations revolve around reporting, and we are still working through some of those.

"A key element in our decision was the large development team they had. We knew we were going to need a number of customizations to get the system where we wanted it, and we felt comfortable with their developers and the fast response times we were seeing from them during the due diligence process and beyond.

"Also, our old system had a number of safeguards built in for operators. For example, if an operator selected the wrong paperboard, a warning would pop up so that error could be corrected on the spot. We can now do that with HiFlow. "

**Visibility, efficiency and Industry 4.0**

Plier believed that HiFlow was scalable and would help the company proactively grow its business. "It's a comprehensive, integrated, and automated Industry 4.0 solution," she adds. "It includes Scada monitors to track plant productivity and operator performance in real time, and it uses smart scheduling to best utilize machine time, and we are still fine tuning the scheduling system to meet our specific needs.

"HiFlow's Machine Execution System (MES) module offers real-time data exchange with machines and devices and helps us better manage our warehousing operation."



“

No system will ever be perfect," Plier notes, "But working with HiFlow, we were able to get 99% of what we needed, and the system is serving us well.

– Amy Plier

## Getting what you need

Implementing a new HiFlow is not a trivial process, and Plier emphasizes the need for patience, and for a thorough review of all requirements. "No system will ever be perfect," she says, "and I made sure our team had the right expectations going in.

But working with HiFlow, we were able to get 99% of what we needed, and the system is serving us well. We are still working to get a few things optimized for our business ... and we believe our customizations will make the HiFlow solution even more valuable to other folding carton companies." Plier plans to continue the process of customizing with HiFlow's development team in the future.

## Streamlining business systems, no more siloed data

Another area that has benefited from the new system is the purchasing system. "Before," she says, "people created purchase orders using Word documents. Now we are taking advantage of HiFlow's purchasing system, and we have a much more consistent operation in that regard. Plus, it integrates with our accounting system, so it makes it easier to monitor overall performance. As far as purchasing materials, we use the system to issue the purchase orders, create the goods receipt and then issue the materials to the warehouse or production floor. So, it has really been streamlined and error-free."

"We appreciated the fact that we had access to customizable dashboards using Microsoft's Power BI, as well as extensive production, warehouse, and sales reports out of the box, and we have been able to dial in our Power BI reporting even more so we can better customize our reporting. Also important to us was its ability to integrate with our other internal software solutions, including our Microsoft Dynamics GP accounting system. We did not want siloes of information – we wanted to see a full 360-degree real-time view of our business, and HiFlow will give us that as we complete these final customizations."

## Ongoing support

HiFlow has over 50 technical team members and developers. They typically offer a four-hour response time, but the actual response time is usually even faster. Wausau Container has access to unlimited support, and the maintenance license fees are flat unless additional modules are added, making the cost structure predictable.

"We looked at a number of solutions before we chose HiFlow," Plier concludes. "HiFlow came out on top in all our analyses. While the implementation took a bit longer than expected – which is quite normal in these types of situations – HiFlow not only stuck with us every step of the way, but they were proactive in addressing all our issues. I am extremely pleased with the outcome, and the solution has lived up to their promises and our expectations. I believe we are set for the next 30 years in continuing this partnership with HiFlow as we build a more efficient and profitable future!"



“

The HiFlow team totally outworked the competition," Plier says. "They were more interested in learning about our business, answered all our questions thoroughly in deep-dive demos, and were actively engaged, including the CEO, in these calls.

– Amy Plier

## Why HiFlow Solutions?

**In making the decision, Plier also considered:**

- HiFlow Solutions' global expansion into new markets.
- The investment in technology and process improvement.
- The sense that HiFlow is an experienced partner with a vision for development.
- The strong project management and development teams and the incredibly fast response time she gets.

Amy Plier considers HiFlow Solutions to be more than just a vendor – they are a true partner in her business. She regularly holds Microsoft Teams meetings with their sales and product development teams and has found their references from other successful implementations very favorable.

According to Plier, the HiFlow team went above and beyond the competition. They showed a genuine interest in learning about her business, provided thorough answers to all their questions in detailed demonstrations, and were actively involved, with even the CEO participating in the calls.

"Another benefit for us was that every one of these sessions was recorded and placed in a private library for us for future reference – invaluable. It made it easy for team members to refresh their memory about certain activities as well as to onboard new staff members without having to wait for a new training session to be scheduled. In addition, I used those recordings to create written Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) specific to our business, which is also a valuable tool for our team."

## The Benefits of Partnering with HiFlow Solutions



**We implement – fast.** The HiFlow system combines MIS and MES software with easy ERP integration.



**We fill your ERP gaps.** By optimizing ERP systems with MIS and MES features required for packaging and label printing.



**We create automated environments.** With seamless connections from order intake to shipping and invoicing.



**We feed you data.** With insights from real time, critical information from your production shop floor, personnel, and equipment.



**We let you see.** From smart scheduling to nested layouts to workflow diagrams, instantly see where you stand within the job.