

ACTIVANT IMPROVED

VISION DELIVERS EFFICIENCIES AND BUSINESS VISIBILITY AT UESCO



Executive Summary

Evolving from an automotive electrical service company in 1923, United Electric Supply Company (UESCO) now runs seven businesses covering the full range of automotive service, repair and parts distribution. Everything from paint to small engines to accessories are available at UESCO. Throughout North Dakota, South Dakota and Minnesota UESCO sells to automotive jobbers,

independent repair shops, car dealers, fleet managers and farming operations. In 2004, UESCO began running on Activant Vision™ and now appreciates increased employee productivity, better system reliability and faster, easy-to-use business management reports that guide day-to-day decisions.

Increased Productivity with Activant Vision Integrated Business Management Solution

Prior to Vision, UESCO ran on three separate systems (a standalone system for warehouse and inventory management, a standalone system for Accounting, and a standalone shop management system for service) and manually re-entered data from one system to another. UESCO realized that in order to drive business growth, it needed an integrated system complete with easy-to-use reporting. After a thorough evaluation of competing systems UESCO selected Vision for its seamless integration with Microsoft Business Solutions—Great Plains and Pace Software—Yes Shop Management, open and flexible architecture and confidence in Vision's technical and field support teams.

After a smooth transition, UESCO soon recognized timesavings and efficiencies. "Right after migration, we started saving administrative time. In fact, we eventually eliminated the position that re-entered our data," explains Steve Larson, executive vice president, UESCO. "Perhaps even more beneficial was that our managers immediately had a better understanding of how an event or transaction in one part of the business affected others. With our separate systems, we didn't have that visibility."

Orders are entered more quickly than with the old warehouse system, which frees staff to both process more orders in the same amount of time and work on other customer-facing activities. "Our Vision system saves at least one hour per day at our counters with its ability to pull up a quote and quickly convert it to an order," asserts Daryl Backland, warehouse manager, UESCO. "We often get calls from customers checking price and availability. During that call, our counter staff creates a quote in Vision. When the customer calls back to place the order, we simply pull up that quote and with a few clicks, an order is generated."

Improved Inventory Management Across Multiple Locations

UESCO appreciates Vision's ability to transfer inventory between locations. "A single transaction in our Vision system removes inventory from one location and adds it to another. It's quick, easy and our inventory is more accurate," says Daryl. "With five locations this feature alone saves several hours each day."

PROFILE

Headquarters: Fargo, North Dakota

Sales Breakdown: 80% wholesale,
20% retail

Number of Employees: 68

Locations: 5

Founded: 1923

Affiliation: AIM

"Activant Vision integrates all our business operations, which allows us to use manpower more effectively. We can grow with Vision and continue to increase our competitiveness."

STEVE LARSON
EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT
UESCO

Returning product to manufacturers is significantly easier with Vision. What were manual processes involving hand-written forms and cumbersome reconciliations, are now performed with information from several automated reports. Credit memos are cleared in a fraction of the time, inventory is moved out of UESCO, and manufacturer pricing is verified—all with minimal manual intervention.

Customer Information Reduces Accounts Receivables

UESCO proactively uses Vision-provided customer account information during the sales process. With more than 80% of sales on account, this capability has made a noticeable improvement. “When an order is being placed, we see that customer’s credit status. We instantly know whether we can extend credit, or need to use another form of payment,” explains Mark Sailer, chief financial officer, UESCO. “This has really helped improve our receivables management. It’s a great system of checks and balances to ensure we don’t overextend ourselves with a customer.”

Reports Guide Business Decisions

With Vision and IBM wIntegrate, custom reports are created on highlighting all aspects of the business that provide managers with more information than ever before from which to make informed business decisions. For instance, one report indicates the warranty rate for every customer and UESCO uses that information to identify opportunities to lower the overall warranty rate by increasing product and installation training for customers with high warranty rates.

UESCO also uses reports to help schedule staff. “We have reports that show us how many invoices are generated per hour. From this information, we create a work schedule to have maximum staff when customers are calling or in the store. We also schedule drivers to ensure we have a maximum number of vehicles operating during peak hours,” states Daryl.

The ability to drill from on-screen summary information to transaction detail delivers critical information to UESCO’s employees and managers. “With a few clicks, I can trace a figure back to the customer invoice to see exactly what was purchased at what price. No digging through hard copies or hours of laborious research,” explains Mark.

“We can have a snapshot of how the business is doing anytime during the month. With our previous systems, it was time consuming to create a manual snapshot report and often we decided it wasn’t worth it,” continues Mark. “Using our Vision system along with Great Plains, we have a better report in less than 10 minutes.”

UESCO credits Vision with efficiency gains and its ability to remain competitive. “Gaining margin through efficiency is important to us. Our Vision system allows us to more effectively use our manpower by automating actions that used to be manual,” asserts Steve. “We can grow with Vision and continue to increase our competitiveness.”



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ABOUT ACTIVANT

Activant, a leading technology provider of business management solutions serving small and medium-sized businesses, offers customers tailored proprietary software, professional services, content, supply chain connectivity, and analytics. Activant’s systems are designed to help customers increase sales, boost productivity, operate more cost-efficiently, improve inventory turns and enhance trading partner relationships.

**To learn more about this or other
Activant products and services,
please call 888.463.4700.**



Activant Solutions Inc. • 7683 Southfront Road • Livermore, CA 94551
Phone: 888.448.2636 • E-mail: automotive.marketing@activant.com • www.activant.com

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