ICF Industries, Inc.

Located in Pleasant Hill, Missouri, ICF Industries offers custom metal fabrication services using steel, stainless steel and aluminum, primarily to the agricultural and automotive industries. Its products range from stand-alone piece parts to complicated assemblies, and include engine lifts, heavy-duty mounting brackets, wheelchair assist platforms, foundation weldments, and electronic boxes for railroads, as well as seasonal products like lawnmowers.

ICF Industries has been serving customers since 1981. This picture was taken in 2013 and includes a 30,000-square-foot warehouse addition on top left of the building.

Outdoor products are just one of ICF Industries' offerings to its very diverse set of industry specialties.

Founded in 1981, ICF Industries' roots go back over 45 years, when founder Les Garrett opened his first job shop in Kansas City, Missouri. From its initial 10,000-square-foot building, the company's production facilities have expanded to 119,000 square feet. As part of its full menu of fabricating services, ICF Industries offers laser cutting, CNC shearing, punch and punch press, powder coat painting, press brake forming, and MIG, TIG and spot welding. Employee owned since 1999, ICF Industries is ISO-9001:2008 certified.

When selecting an ERP software to manage the business, most manufacturers look mainly at the system's features and capabilities. ICF Industries liked all the "bells and whistles" offered by Global Shop Solutions ERP software, but chose it mainly for its outstanding technical support.

"When you purchase a complex software system, good tech support is essential," says Paul O'Brien, IT administrator for ICF Industries, "because if you can't get problems resolved in a timely manner, you will have problems. We chose Global Shop Solutions because it has one of the highest-rated customer and tech support in the industry. We also received very good recommendations from other Global Shop Solutions customers."

Improving Material and Labor Collection

When O'Brien joined ICF Industries, the company had been using Global Shop Solutions ERP software for a while, but not as effectively as it could. After checking to ensure the system was set up properly, he immediately installed Shop Floor Data Collection stations on the shop floor to simplify the labor tracking process. This produced big improvements in job costing and direct labor balancing.

Instead of manually inputting their time into the system, workers now clock on and off barcoded work orders using the Shop Floor Data Collection station scanners. ICF Industries also uses the scanners to track indirect time by having employees clock into indirect work orders when they experience indirect time, and to issue raw materials using the materials sequences on work orders.

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Using Shop Floor Data Collection stations, ERP software provides a complete labor and material data collection on the shop floor for every employee every day.

"With Shop Floor Data Collection stations, everything is faster and more accurate," says O'Brien. "In particular, job costing is more precise because we're tracking time and materials to the minute. And daily balancing has shrunk to almost nothing. Before, we had to fix a minimum of 20 entries every day; now it's once every couple of days at most."

Tracking Transactional Inventory
In his quest to improve how ICF Industries uses the ERP software, O'Brien also tackled transactional inventory to get a better understanding of how the system works when issuing material, going through the general ledger, and managing work in progress.

"We wanted to know how much we have on inventory, along with the cost and the extended cost," says O'Brien. "We also wanted to see how it shows up on the general ledger so we know how much money we have in the finished goods product."

"Before, we didn't have this visibility of data," adds O'Brien. "With Global Shop Solutions, I can see where we stand from a cost standpoint and, more important, why. For example, if we're a little out of balance, I can check to see if we set up some transaction codes incorrectly, POs out of balance with their invoice, or settings for partial shipments. By having a better understanding of transactional inventory, I can get the system more in balance and working better for us."

Meanwhile, Auto Purchasing in the Inventory application is generating significant timesavings. The purchasing agent can easily see what is due and purchase materials accordingly while ensuring that all work orders have the correct due dates.

The Advanced Planning & Scheduling (APS) application enables ICF Industries to pull dispatch lists for departments and workcenters. It also helps to ensure that all due work orders get put into the shop in a timely manner. And Shop Floor Control makes it easy to generate accurate, detailed work orders – whether they're for one part or ten thousand.

Managing Small Jobs and Large
The majority of ICF Industries jobs involve hundreds or thousands of parts for a customer. However, they occasionally make an engine lift product for rental companies even though these customers sometimes only buy two or three products at a time.

ICF Industries specializes in powder coating fabricated sheet metal components ranging from large assemblies to small brackets.

"The main difference with these orders is the size of the sale and the fact that it may not be a repeat customer," says O'Brien. "And that's one advantage of Global Shop Solutions; it can handle any size order – large or small, repeat or one-off – without requiring us to do anything different."

Another time saver – ICF Industries stocks products in finished goods inventory for many of its customers, building a large order from which the customer can pull product every few weeks. Global Shop Solutions ERP software enables ICF Industries to manage raw materials, finished goods and component parts for finished goods inventories all within the same system.

"What I like best is we can see what we have in inventory before producing work orders, which allows us to manufacture more efficiently," says O'Brien. "For example, suppose we issue a work order for 500 parts. We can check finished goods inventory and see we already have 50 in stock. This allows us to adjust the work order accordingly so we don't overbuild parts."

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Saving Time in So Many Ways

Global Shop Solutions ERP software helps ICF Industries simplify processes and save time in many different ways, including the ease of creating custom Crystal reports to format data the way people like to see it. O'Brien has also taken advantage of ARC, Global Shop Solutions' online "store" of free custom applications, to simplify the company's in-house training process.

"I recently downloaded an employee training addition from ARC that helped us revolutionize our training program in terms of organizing and tracking," he says. "Our old spreadsheet format was overwhelming, with the data all over the place. The ARC program has made the process very simple and easy to keep track of our training requirements for our ISO standard."

O'Brien also loves the Help menu. Previously, anyone needing help had to navigate through several pages to find the needed information. Now, right-clicking on a menu item directly opens the help file specific to that page.

"The new Help feature is much easier to navigate and more time efficient, especially when I'm at someone's desk helping them with an issue," says O'Brien. "It has dramatically reduced the amount of time required to get help for a report, transaction, file or menu item."

Precise Job Costing for Better Job Quoting

According to O'Brien, the Shop Floor Control, Inventory and Estimating/Routing applications all contribute to more precise job costing and accurate quoting.

"Not only can we provide our customers with accurate estimates," he says, "but once we turn them into work orders we can track the job costing very accurately. That, in turn, gives us a high level of comfort when quoting jobs. By tracking every job through job costing, we can make sure the customer is getting good pricing while we make the expected profit margins."

When asked to identify the software's most valuable feature, O'Brien goes back to the issue of technical support.

"Global Shop Solutions is an all-inclusive solution, with accounting, payroll, job costing, inventory and everything else you need in one complete package," he explains. "So when you have problems, you only have to call one vendor with one problem instead of three vendors with three different problems."

"Global Shop Solutions responds quickly whenever we call in," concludes O'Brien. "Their tech reps are very knowledgeable about the software. And they'll work with us until the problem is solved. The bells and whistles in the software are great. But for me, it all comes down to customer service and support, and Global Shop Solutions excels in this area."

Trumpf TruBend 5085 4-axis at work at ICF Industries.

ICF Industries currently has two 4000-watt lasers, one 6000-watt laser, one punch and one punch/laser combo, all with loaders and unloaders.

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