

The Right Way To Go Live With ERP Software

TWO MANUFACTURERS' STORIES

Danny Ramos
New ERP Implementations Team Lead
Global Shop Solutions



Image courtesy of Electro-Mechanical Corporation

 **Global Shop**
SOLUTIONS
ERP SOFTWARE
We simplify your manufacturing.™



Have you considered ERP software for your manufacturing business but held back due to tales of implementations that went horribly wrong? Sadly, some of those stories are true. But with thousands of successful ERP implementations under our belt, we can assure you it doesn't have to be that way. In fact, when done right it often leads to experiences that some of our customers consider transformative.

We recently interviewed two of our new customers about their Go Live experiences – the period of time between initial planning and launching their new ERP system. They shared their thoughts on what contributed to the successful implementation, what they learned from the experience, and some of the business improvements the software has generated.



Image courtesy of Electro-Mechanical Corporation

Electro Mechanical

About Electro-Mechanical Corporation

Headquartered in Bristol, Virginia, Electro-Mechanical Corporation (EMC) is one of America's largest privately held, family-owned manufacturers of electrical apparatus. Its family of manufacturing, repair and service companies is recognized around the world for supplying high-quality power distribution components and the design and construction of innovative mining systems.

EMC operates with five different manufacturing companies and two repair and service companies for over a million square feet of modern manufacturing facility.

To learn more about EMC, call 276.466.8200 or visit their website at www.electro-mechanical.com.

For 30 years, EMC operated with a legacy system that grew increasingly unable to meet the needs of a rapidly growing manufacturing firm. In January of 2020, EMC launched Global Shop Solutions as its new ERP software – a move that Kathy Watson, Director of IT for EMC, describes as “transformative for the company and the members of the implementation team.” We recently asked Watson about EMC’s Go Live experience.

Global Shop Solutions: **Why did you select Global Shop Solutions as your ERP system and when did you Go Live with the software?**

Watson: We chose it mainly for the robust functionality. As a mixed-mode manufacturer with two separate repair facilities and a configured product line, we needed an ERP system that could handle different types of manufacturing. We looked at several different systems, and Global Shop Solutions had everything we were looking for, including a [Product Configurator](#) that fit us perfectly. We also liked the U.S.-based support and the fact that Global Shop Solutions is family-owned with a family culture. We went live with the software on January 6, 2020.

Global Shop Solutions: **Who was on your Go Live team and why did you choose them?**

Watson: Our team consisted of 10 Electro-Mechanical experts from several functional groups – engineering, production control, sales, finance, purchasing and IT – and different company locations. Individuals were selected based on their tenure with EMC and their knowledge of our existing processes.

Global Shop Solutions: **How much time did you spend planning and preparing for Go Live? What were your expectations for timing, workload for your team, and managing data and processes?**

Watson: We do a lot of engineer-to-order work, so we keep everything, including a lot of old data. The Global Shop Solutions team made sure we understood the importance of accurate data migration, so we began working on it well in advance of our Go Live date and continued working on it throughout the project. In addition to master data, we also loaded open orders that weren’t scheduled to begin until after first of the year.

To devote our full attention to final preparations, management allowed us to shut down the entire company for six days just prior to Go Live. We used this time to process transactional data and reconcile it with the old system. It took a lot of time, but it was well spent.

Global Shop Solutions: **Did you opt for a phased Go Live – converting specific functions of your business at a time – or a one-time launch of the entire system and company?**

Watson: We implemented the entire system because phasing in would have required continued use of the old system, which would have made it difficult to automatically populate data throughout Global Shop Solutions. We didn't have time for dual data entry, and part of the reason for installing ERP was to eliminate as much manual work as possible.

Global Shop Solutions: **What were your most important objectives upon going live with the software?**

Watson: Our primary goal for the first week was maintaining the ability to take orders and ship products. Next, we focused on eliminating ancillary databases and spreadsheets and making all the data available in Global Shop Solutions. Other goals included getting better at scheduling and costing.

Global Shop Solutions: **What were the biggest challenges during the Go Live process?**

Watson: The amount of data and the number of users were two big concerns. We wanted to make sure all current orders were loaded correctly before going live. At the same time, our team of 10 had to support about 100 people using the software for the first time.



One of the best decisions we made was having Global Shop Solutions consultants on site during Go Live. Their assistance made a big difference in supporting a smooth transition. They rolled up their sleeves and went right to work with us, taking a lot of internal support calls and helping people get unstuck. They are very knowledgeable about the system, and we took full advantage of their expertise to resolve issues. Their presence made it much easier for the Core Team to handle the large numbers of users.

Global Shop Solutions: **What did your team do to prepare for Go Live? Was any special training required for staff members?**

Watson: We did two things that made a real difference. First, we conducted User Acceptance Testing (UAT). The Core Team identified people in their respective areas they depended on and trained them in a variety of different scenarios. This UAT gave the Core Team the opportunity to share the processes they created in the 'design' phase of the project with key users from the business and get their feedback, that way we knew things would work. We then conducted general training for the rest of the users in their functional areas. Moving from an old system to a new one with so much functionality can be daunting; the UAT and the user training both played key roles in helping people let go of the old system and accept the new one.

Global Shop Solutions: **How many days did the Go Live process take?**

Watson: We dedicated six days before cutover to Core Team activities. After going live, it took about a month to work out the glitches and get everyone comfortable with the system. A change of this magnitude takes a while to get people settled, so we were happy with the time frame.

Global Shop Solutions: What was day one like after Go Live?

Watson: Very busy, but most of the problems were minor – people having trouble logging in or difficulty with a certain screen or process. The Core Team devoted all our time to helping people do what they needed to do. We were exhausted at end of day, but it was a good day. Most importantly, we continued taking orders and producing and shipping products from day one.

Global Shop Solutions: What factors contributed the most to a successful Go Live?

Watson: Doing the data transformation over a long period of time so it was clean and functioning when users logged in for the first time. Conducting the UAT. Training select individuals to assist the Core Team in supporting some of the processes during Go Live.

The support from Global Shop Solutions was invaluable – both before and during Go Live.

I also give a lot of credit to our management team for providing their full support. Anything we asked for, they made sure we got, including the shut down at the end of the year. They allowed us to pull superstars out of the business to serve on the Core Team and devote a year to getting ready. We couldn't have done it without that top-down support.

Global Shop Solutions: What, if anything, occurred that you didn't expect?

Watson: The Global Shop Solutions implementation team did a great job of preparing us, so the process unfolded mostly as we expected. A few things weren't set up properly, but they turned out to be minor problems. We were prepared to have some issues with user acceptance, but even that turned out to be less than expected.

Global Shop Solutions: What did you learn from the Go Live process?

Watson: We learned we can take on projects of this magnitude and successfully complete them. The Core Team can look back and say we did something that transformed EMC. In less than a year we already do many things very differently, and we're looking forward to changing more.

Global Shop Solutions: What's next? What are your priorities for continuous improvement?

Watson: Moving forward, the goal is to continue training so we can make full use of the software. This will include getting more fluent with the [Advanced Planning & Scheduling](#) (APS) module, improving quoting, and [integrating](#) Global Shop Solutions with SolidWorks® so engineers can automatically upload BOM data rather than keying it in. We also need some fine tuning in product costing and financial reporting.

Overall, we're very pleased with the outcome of the Go Live process. Global Shop Solutions has given us a lot of new tools and plenty of support. We can access our data much easier and faster than we ever could with our old system.



About Miller Weldmaster

Miller Weldmaster is a global manufacturer of welding machines and technologies with operations and distributors in over 100 countries. They provide custom, automated manufacturing solutions that include industrial fabric welding, research and design, and building equipment to meet exact specifications. Miller Weldmaster helps other manufacturers simplify their production processes. Headquartered in Navarre, Ohio, the firm also provides training, parts and repair services, and technical support for their customers around the world.

To learn more about Miller Weldmaster call 330.333.4291 or visit www.weldmaster.com.



After years of operating with separate sales, production, engineering and accounting platforms, Miller Weldmaster implemented Global Shop Solutions ERP software to manage the business from one comprehensive system. We spoke with Todd Lint, the company's VP of Continuous Improvement, about their Go Live experience.

Global Shop Solutions:

Why did you select Global Shop Solutions as your ERP system and when did you Go Live?

Lint:

We went live on March 2, 2020. When we began researching various ERP systems many years earlier, we compiled a lengthy list of our wants and needs in each department and for the organization as a whole. We then sent this list to different ERP vendors, asking them to indicate which wants and needs their system supported and which ones it didn't. Global Shop Solutions quickly rose to the top of the list.

One of our biggest problems was the inability of our marketing and CRM platforms to communicate with our production platform. With so much manual data entry, it often took weeks to get an order for one of our standard pieces of equipment onto the shop floor and into production. With Global Shop Solutions, we can now take an order in the morning and have it in production by the afternoon. It was definitely the right choice for us.

Global Shop Solutions:

Who was on your Go Live team and why did you choose them?

Lint:

I led the implementation team. We filled it with a middle manager from each department to ensure we addressed their wants and needs, got their buy-in, and kept things aligned between departments.

Global Shop Solutions: **How much time did you spend planning and preparing for Go Live? What were your expectations for timing, workload for your team, and managing data and processes?**

Lint: We started planning in January 2019, with the goal of going live in January 2020. It took us longer than we expected to clean the data and get it ready to migrate to Global Shop Solutions. That was the biggest hurdle throughout the planning process because if you don't get the data right you will have a lot of problems when you Go Live.

The second key factor was making sure we had enough time to focus on the planning. The business still has to function during the preparation process but serving on the implementation team can be a full-time job in itself. Fortunately, senior management gave us their full support, allowing us the time to do the work required for a successful Go Live. Even so, other priorities sometimes reared their heads, which contributed to the two-month delay in our Go Live date.

Global Shop Solutions: **What were your most important objectives upon going live with the software?**

Lint:



One of the first things we wanted to do was simplify the creation of BOMs and routers. Since integrating our [CAD system](#) with Global Shop Solutions, we can now import BOM and router details directly into the ERP system without any manual entry. We get the finished BOMs and routers to the shop floor much faster and the data is more accurate.

We had also been wanting to launch an [eCommerce](#) site for a long time, but the abundance of manual processes in our old system prevented us from doing that. Global Shop Solutions provides plug-ins that automatically send website orders directly to the ERP system, automate credit card payments and shipping, and facilitate all the other things needed to make an eCommerce site work. Global Shop Solutions has taken our website to a whole new level.

Global Shop Solutions: **Did you opt for a phased Go Live – converting specific functions of your business at a time – or a one-time launch of the entire system and company?**

Lint: The one-time launch. We looked at it like ripping off a Band-Aid – better to do it all at once and be done with it. If we had left some of the old systems running, people would be tempted to fall back on them, which defeats the purpose of moving to a new system.

Global Shop Solutions: What were the biggest challenges during the Go Live process?

Lint: Without question it was the time required to clean up all the data. Another big challenge involved trying to get our teammates to think outside the box; to understand that the way we would do some things in Global Shop Solutions may not be the way we've been doing them for the past few years. The software allows for a great deal of customization, but we bought the system to implement manufacturing best practices that would allow us to operate more efficiently.

This issue came up many times during Go Live; people wanted to make Global Shop Solutions fit our old way of doing things. Our challenge was to help people see the bigger picture and understand how doing things differently would make their jobs simpler and benefit the company as a whole.

Global Shop Solutions: What did your team do to prepare for Go Live? Was any special training required for staff members?

Lint: Five of our core team members went to Global Shop Solutions' [ERP Boot Camp](#) – a week-long intensive training experience. All the other training took place in-house. Global Shop Solutions implementation consultants came to our place to conduct “train the trainer” sessions. Those team members then spread out to teach other departments. About once a month, a consultant would come on site to check up on how our Go Live preparations were coming along.

Global Shop Solutions: How many days did the process of Go Live take?

Lint: This may sound impossible, but if you plan properly you can do it over a weekend. We started bringing the data over on a Friday and finished on Saturday. Then we brought over our current AR and AP data and jobs in production on the floor. We made sure everything balanced out and tied in, and that was it. We pulled the trigger on Monday and went live.

It takes a lot of planning to go live in such a short timeframe. We conducted the transfers several times before the weekend to make sure we had it down pat. We had [data collection](#) systems set up and functioning to make sure they were ready to go. And we tested, tested, and tested some more to make sure everything functioned properly. When it came to taking new orders and keeping production going on the shop floor, we went live without missing a beat.

Global Shop Solutions: Were the Global Shop Solutions consultants on campus with you or did you work together remotely?

Lint: We worked with them via phone during the first week of Go Live. They joined us on site for the second week. The consultants spent time with each department. They walked around helping individuals with specific issues. They also hung out in the training room for anyone to come in and ask questions and get help. It was like having our own personal on-site tech support – very helpful!

Global Shop Solutions:

What factors contributed the most to a successful Go Live?

Lint:

Starting a year ahead of time, careful planning, and plenty of testing before going live. Having the full support of management also made a big difference. The Global Shop Solutions consultants listened, communicated well, and were committed to making sure our Go Live went according to plan.

Global Shop Solutions:

What, if anything, occurred that you didn't expect?

Lint:

One of our staff members accidentally deleted part of the database. Fortunately, one of the consultants was able to restore the data to its previous format. That was a stressful situation!

Global Shop Solutions:

What did you learn from the Go Live process?

Lint:

Whenever you complete a project of this magnitude, you always look back at what you would have done differently. My two big "do-overs" would be dedicating more time to cleaning the data and extending the Go Live time frame. We're still dealing with some issues related to our old data.

Global Shop Solutions:

What's next? What are your priorities for continuous improvement?

Lint:

Obviously, this is a primary focus for me. We haven't taken full advantage of APS yet because we still need to fix some areas, such as estimating and lead times on purchase parts. My goal is to get those squared away so we can begin using its full capabilities.

We're continuing to work on the eCommerce site to make it more robust. We're constantly looking for ways to automate processes where possible. And we continue to conduct training on a regular basis. We will never stop pushing to get better, and for us that means continually learning more about Global Shop Solutions to help make our people better, which will make us better as an organization.



“THE GLOBAL SHOP SOLUTIONS CONSULTANTS LISTENED, COMMUNICATED WELL, AND WERE COMMITTED TO MAKING SURE OUR GO LIVE WENT ACCORDING TO PLAN.”

Todd Lint,
VP of Continuous Improvement
Miller Weldmaster



Have you **selected the right ERP** for you?

Have you considered the **ERP implementation process**?

Click the links to read other manufacturers' stories on those two vital parts of the ERP purchasing process.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Danny Ramos is a Team Lead for New Implementations at Global Shop Solutions. He leads a team of Operations and Financial Consultants and Project Managers in the implementation, launch and continued refinement of Global Shop Solutions ERP software for new customers. Ramos graduated magna cum laude from Indiana Tech with a degree in Business Administration and Human Resources.

To learn more about ERP Go Live, call 1.800.364.5958 or visit www.globalshopsolutions.com.

