



**Smarter Design. Happier Customers.**

## Information Drives Steere Enterprises' Success

A foremost international plastics supplier, Steere Enterprises was founded in 1949 and has been on the leading edge of process development ever since. The company produces a wide variety of products using three main manufacturing processes: dip molding, blow molding and their patented Dual Process™ overmolding technology.

In the 1950's Steere was the manufacturer behind the molded plastic coin purse craze during which more than 20 million bendable coin carriers were sold. In 1961, Steere pioneered the development of dip molded automotive seat belts for General Motors.

One of the best results of Steere's technical expertise is its Dual Process™ patented overmolding process, which is used exclusively for the company's automotive business. Combining blow molding and injection overmolding, this connective technology reduces component weight and cost while meeting stringent end-use requirements. This innovative process has been the key driver of the Steere's growth in recent years.

In the past twenty years, Steere has focused its core efforts on the automotive industry making under-the-hood air induction ducts and assemblies which are used to precisely route air-flow within the engine compartment. Automotive business now accounts for three-quarters of its business. The company's consistent growth is the driving force behind a new 54,000-square-foot dip mold facility at its headquarters in Tallmadge, Ohio.

A recognized leader in the plastics molding industry, Steere has received numerous honors from customers and the industry including:

- Chrysler Gold Pentastar Award
- Purodenso Supplier of the Year
- Fiskars Supplier of the Year
- O'Cedar Vining Supplier of the Year
- Governors Safety Award

### **ERP Software Provides Data Integrity throughout the Enterprise**

As Steere Enterprises focused on growing its technical expertise and innovative product offerings, the need for consistent quality information regarding every aspect of the business became more than apparent. It became a critical juncture in the company's progress. The company used a hodge-podge of systems with a profusion of spreadsheets and pockets of data islands throughout the company. With each department using a separate spreadsheet package, the capacity to share data was very limited as well as inconvenient. A fully integrated ERP system was necessary to overcome each department's isolated data and establish a common system to unite operations.

Steere began an extensive evaluation process to find the right system. This process included a needs analysis, an RFP with responses from numerous vendors, detailed interviews with the top six vendors and the final selection of Enterprise IQ from IQMS, based in Paso Robles, Calif.



### **The Company**

Since 1949, Ohio-based Steere Enterprises has been creating value-added benefits for their customers with innovative plastics solutions. Their patented Dual Process™ overmolding technology, dip molding and blow molding capabilities have allowed Steere to maintain their standing as a leading manufacturer.

In addition to being ISO certified, Steere Enterprises is committed to comply with environmental legislation, regulations, and is committed to preventing pollution and continually improving its environmental performance and being a good community citizen.

Steere's customers are made up of leaders in the automotive, hand tool, lawn & garden, housewares, general industrial, medical, sporting goods, fitness, hardware and electrical markets.

Designed to add business intelligence to the manufacturing enterprise, EnterpriselQ uses the latest technological advances to deliver the industry's most comprehensive single-source single database ERP system. EnterpriselQ does not rely on third-party interfaces to achieve its broad range of functionality. Instead, IQMS uses a single source database in an easy-to-manage, cost-effective environment, powered by Oracle®, the world's number one database. The single database solution provides value in data visibility, virtually eliminates interface customization and provides a smooth path for upgrading. In fact, IQMS provides free upgrades for all seat licenses, making the system more economical over the long term.

With a strong foundation in the plastics industry, EnterpriselQ provides plastics manufacturers like Steere with a solution that fits well with their business and expands functionality with emergent requirements

More than any other system, EnterpriselQ offered the most complete data integration capabilities where accurate data from the production process populates the entire system. This was most evident in the way EnterpriselQ integrates its RealTime module, which tracks machine production in real time, and with the use of scanners in conjunction with the Wireless Warehouse Management module. The ability to add modules as Steere grows contributed to their interest in EnterpriselQ.

System maintenance was another critical factor for Steere. EnterpriselQ's perpetual license, which provides all upgrades at no cost with each seat license, adds financial value to the overall cost of ownership. Steere had expected to add a full-time system administrator with its new ERP system. IQMS' ease of administration and support made an additional employee unnecessary, adding even more value to the overall EnterpriselQ system.

Within six months from the contract signing in June 2002, Steere completed the EnterpriselQ implementation including the core system and additional modules such as RealTime, Wireless Warehouse Management, EDI, Quality, CRM and Accounting.

Steere Enterprises currently has 31 concurrent EnterpriselQ licenses with approximately 50 users, 33 machines connected to and automatically monitored by RealTime and multiple scanners in use with the Wireless Warehouse Management module. Steere uses EnterpriselQ at its two manufacturing facilities, which operate 24/7, as well as its warehouse located on the company's campus.

As the EnterpriselQ system is continually updated with new information, everyone in the company is working with the same up-to-the-minute data, which has made a significant difference in the way decisions are made and the speed with which the company moves forward.

### **Electronic Customer Communication is Critical**

As an automotive supplier, Steere Enterprises relies on Electronic Data Interchange (EDI) to process business transactions with their automotive manufacturing customers. The EnterpriselQ EDI translator assists and expedites the exchange of critical business data, enabling Steere to meet their customers' demands for processing EDI transactions.

Since EnterpriselQ's EDI is natively integrated with the system, no cumbersome third party interfaces are necessary. EnterpriselQ's EDI translates incoming files directly and automatically generates outgoing files for transfer back to customers and suppliers. EDI eliminates manual data entry of incoming forecast and releases, and provides accurate generation of outgoing messages such as Advanced Shipping Notices. The EDI interface accommodates various industries including the AIAG supply chain recommended business practices for EDI implementation. IQMS also offers programming services to create templates for inbound and outbound files and can provide training to customers who can then manage their own templates

Before EnterpriselQ, Steere relied on faxed information that was re-keyed into their system. As the number of company's trading partners grew, so did the challenge of maintaining data integrity with this approach.



2231 Wisteria Lane, Paso Robles, CA 93226 • 1.866.FOR.ERP2 • [www.iqms.com](http://www.iqms.com)

**IQMS**

The EnterpriseIQ EDI system has improved customer service, and allowed the company to grow without adding to the data entry overhead while at the same time improving data integrity.

### **Real Information, Real Results**

For manufacturers like Steere, EnterpriseIQ's RealTime Production Management system provides a true execution solution for implementing lean strategies. RealTime gives manufacturers the substantial capacity to reduce waste and optimize production with verifiable results.

Steere connects 32 machines at two plants to EnterpriseIQ's RealTime system, which collects production data at the machine level and feeds it into the system. Using RealTime, management and shop floor supervisors can see exactly how each machine is performing at any given time.

On a job-by-job basis, Steere realizes significant production gains from this detailed information. The company uses RealTime to:

- Monitor total cycle times for each job to track progress and determine exact completion time.
- Use historical data, by job and by machine from monitored cycled times, to maximize the scheduling of future jobs.
- Monitor rejects by machine and by tool to make improvements.
- Improve production reporting.
- Reduce manual data entry and improve data quality in the system.
- Cross production information with preventative maintenance module to schedule maintenance inspections and updates.
- Collect data by work order, part number to improve inventory.
- Print barcode labels for improved inventory tracking.

### **Results with an Eye on the Bottom-Line**

Clear visibility of data is one of the principal benefits Steere receives from EnterpriseIQ, and this visibility has significant bottom-line benefits. The company is able to close its financial books more efficiently and whereas in the past it would take days to count inventory, it now takes hours. Steere can grow without adding headcount, which has significant financial savings for the company.

"We got more than we thought we were going to," said Curt Brown, CFO at Steere Enterprises.

With EnterpriseIQ, Steere can look at efficiencies and profitability on a specific job, which is something the company was unable to do before implementing EnterpriseIQ. According to Brown, EnterpriseIQ allows Steere to analyze data to see where cost structure improvements can be made. This is only possible with the data provided by EnterpriseIQ.

On a long-term basis, Brown believes Steere made the right choice with EnterpriseIQ. According to his recent research, some of the systems Steere evaluated in 2002 are no longer on the market whereas IQMS' EnterpriseIQ is positioned to meet and exceed Steere's needs now and in the future.

**Software**  
EnterpriseIQ™ ERP software system, including: RealTime Production, Electronic Data Interchange (EDI), Preventative Maintenance, Payroll, Project Manager, ShopData, Customer Relationship Management, Quality and Warehouse Management modules.

**Hardware**  
Oracle database with windows-based server platform.



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