



Oracle at Work

Oracle and Unisys with Bliss and Laughlin Steel Company

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Bill Drozda, Director of Information Systems, Bliss and Laughlin Steel Company



Bliss and Laughlin Steel Company realized that remaining an industry leader in the competitive, fast-paced business environment of the '90s would not be easy with the company's proprietary, outdated financial and manufacturing applications running critical business processes on 30-year-old hardware. To more quickly meet the demands of the business, its customers, and its internal users, the company reviewed dozens of applications and a variety of hardware platforms before selecting a scalable, open-systems, client/server solution from Oracle Corporation and Unisys Corporation. The powerful Oracle-Unisys solution includes the industrial-strength Oracle7™ relational database for easy access to information, the tightly integrated Oracle Financials® and Oracle Manufacturing™ applications, and the high performance, high reliability and best price-performance of the U6000/65 symmetrical multiprocessors from Unisys.

Greater User Control and Efficiency

The flexibility of distributed processing was one of the earliest benefits derived from the first phase of the Oracle-Unisys solution. A new communications network—designed by Unisys Network Enable Group—enables users of Bliss and Laughlin's legacy mainframe system to share files and printers with Oracle application users. The network will also allow the manufacturer to implement additional Oracle applications throughout the next year in its five facilities in the U.S. and Canada.

This distributed processing network, coupled with the online data entry capability of the Oracle modules, provides the new solution's primary benefit: it completely shifts control of the applications from the data processing department into the hands of end users. Oracle Flexfields and open interfaces for legacy and third-party system data enable users to easily expand the standard Oracle modules by customizing certain transactions and seamlessly integrating them through Oracle Application Object Library™—without any programming. Customizations can even be transferred to new Oracle software releases.

Bliss and Laughlin has consequently reduced the time needed to implement customized features, increased the flexibility of the applications, and eliminated

Solution Snapshot

Primary use:

Automates, integrates, and increases the functionality and user control of many accounting and manufacturing processes

Hardware:

Unisys U6000/65 symmetrical multiprocessors

Oracle Products:

Oracle7, Oracle Browser,™ Oracle Forms,™ Oracle Reports,™ and Oracle Applications,™ including Oracle Application Object Library, Oracle Assets,™ Oracle Bills of Material,™ Oracle Engineering,™ Oracle General Ledger,™ Oracle Inventory,™ Oracle Purchasing,™ Oracle Payables,™ Oracle Order Entry,™ Oracle Receivables,™ Oracle Reports,™ and Oracle Work in Process™

Oracle Services:

Oracle Education
Oracle Services consulting

Benefits

- Tightens the company's cash flow
- Shortens month-end close process
- Enables users to access accurate, real-time information
- Increases user control and saves time via automated financial functions
- Enables IS to focus on business issues instead of technology issues
- Reduces purchasing paperwork and related costs by 75 percent

the data entry and computer operations staff once dedicated to the financial applications. It has also gained tighter control over its cash flow, as well as the accounting staff's workload, while significantly shortening the month-end close process.

And the ability to match purchase orders to receipts and invoices—automatically making authorized payments and handling only the exceptions manually—has greatly improved the efficiency of the payment process. Plus, business concerns not supported in proprietary solutions of the past, such as extensive multiplant support, lot traceability, and lot allocation, are now handled by the Oracle-Unisys solution.

"We feel that the applications are going to give our users the accurate information and advanced functionality they need to effectively do their jobs," says Bill Drozda, director of Information Services for Bliss and Laughlin. "With the superior training provided by Oracle Education, our end users have found the menu-driven Oracle applications extremely easy to use. Ergonomic features like Oracle Zoom and products like Oracle Browser allow our users to take side trips away from current sessions, retrieve data, and carry it back to their current sessions to complete their transactions."

The open client/server architecture will also allow the company to incorporate new technology as it evolves. The two major

Oracle application upgrades experienced thus far provide better technology and increased application functionality, freeing the IS department from the worry of keeping up with evolving technologies, so they can concentrate on business issues instead.

Reduced Cost, Increased Service

Another of the new system's objectives was to reduce paperwork and unnecessary clerical activity. Since the Oracle Business Alliance program enables Bliss and Laughlin to integrate third-party, best-of-breed solutions into the Oracle-Unisys solution, the company installed an AIFP host fax server so that any Oracle document can be faxed from the purchasing department to outside vendors, reducing the paperwork by about 75 percent.

"As we expand this capability to our other Oracle documents and modules," Drozda says, "we expect to eliminate several million pages of preprinted forms per year and all their associated handling costs. This is one example of how Oracle has allowed us to reduce our costs while we're still increasing our services."

Concludes Drozda, "It's important to have vendors like Unisys and Oracle who cooperate together to ensure an integrated suite of products. We did have some concerns facing this new technology, and it was reassuring that both Oracle and Unisys researched the business issues to make sure there was a fit."

Business Profiles

Bliss and Laughlin Steel

Based in Harvey, Ill., Bliss and Laughlin Steel Company has been the leading producer of the widest variety of steel bars, shapes, and grades in the full finished steel bar industry since the company's founding more than 100 years ago. Its products are bought by manufacturers who machine the steel bars into finished parts for the agricultural, automotive, machinery equipment, industrial, and appliance industries.

Unisys

Unisys Corporation is an information management company, applying information services and technology expertise for business and government worldwide. Unisys' more than 40,000 employees serve clients in some 100 countries. These 60,000 clients include many of the world's largest financial services companies, major airlines and transportation companies, leading communications companies, key health care organizations, more than 1,600 government agencies, and other commercial market leaders.

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