Founded in 1948, Florida Silica Sand Company (Florida Silica), produces silica sand products and distributes more than 3,000 related items to construction companies throughout the southeastern United States. Over the years, the company’s product line has expanded to include hardscapes (brick, pavers, stone and retaining walls), aggregates (decorative rock, sand, clay, and lime rock) and abrasive finishing (abrasives, equipment, replacement parts, and service). Employing more than 80 people, the Fort Lauderdale, Florida-based company has sales offices in Miami, Dania Beach, Riviera Beach and Plant City, Florida.

Need for increased efficiency and real-time reporting

The market for construction and industrial materials is a highly competitive environment, especially for medium-size companies like Florida Silica. Customers ordering products in large volume exert a constant pressure on pricing, which means that the company’s operations management must be highly efficient – especially as fuel and material costs continue to rise.

“We realized that to increase efficiencies, we needed the ability to analyze business data and quickly turn it into useful information,” said Aaron Herwig, Chief Operating Officer at Florida Silica. “We knew if we could implement a real-time reporting system with true business intelligence, we could compete on a level playing field with larger competitors.”

For years, Florida Silica had run its business on an older software platform (AS400) that lacked the capability to gather timely information for managers, so decisions were often made in a vacuum. Nor could the old system analyze retrievable data against current industry metrics – making it difficult to track trends or respond appropriately to fluctuating product pricing on the fly. “We always seemed behind the curve,” says Herwig.

Florida Silica considered retooling its old midrange system, but concluded that would be very expensive. So the priorities were to find an entirely new solution that supported real-time reporting and business intelligence, with a clear roadmap for future development. As a medium-sized company without a large IT department, Florida Silica also wanted to partner with a single provider – a one-stop shop that could help implement, customize and support such a complex undertaking.

"ERT Group improved our operation by pinpointing where we could shed wasteful costs and gain more control over pricing and inventory management. Teamed with Microsoft, ERT Group is a one-stop shop of powerful solutions focused on strong business results.”

Aaron Herwig, Chief Operating Officer, Florida Silica Sand Company

Challenge
A Florida-based construction materials distribution company needed to respond to a competitive marketplace by finding better ways to reduce operating costs and achieve more control over sales, inventory and financial reporting.

Solution
Working with ERT Group, Florida Silica Sand Company implemented a new operating software platform, which included Microsoft Dynamics™ GP, Microsoft SQL Server, Microsoft SharePoint Server, Microsoft PerformancePoint Server, Microsoft Dynamics™ CRM, and ERT Group’s emPower™ Business Intelligence. ERT Group configured all of the Microsoft applications based on Florida Silica Sand Company’s business requirements.

Benefits
Reduced time to generate new sales view of company from 40 to 2 hours; Improved controls over fluctuating product pricing saved $50,000 in first year; timely inventory reporting reduces expenditures on stock and storage; enhanced business intelligence sharpens decision-making and the company’s competitive edge.

Learn more about how ERT Group can benefit your business.

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Experienced, proven provider

“We looked at various providers, and ERT Group was the only vendor who met all of our criteria,” says Craig Schleh, IT Manager at Florida Silica. “Above all, they had a solid understanding of our industry. We could tell them the end result of what we wanted, and they continually came through with the right solutions to achieve those objectives.”

ERT Group implemented a bundle of integrated Microsoft applications, including Microsoft Dynamics GP as the core solution. The product is designed to provide a growing midsize organization like Florida Silica with complete, scalable financial and operational functionality, from rich reporting to forecasting and budgeting.

With financial, purchasing, sales and distribution systems all on the same system, Florida Silica is able to distribute the right information to the right people at the right time, Herwig says. For example, the company’s inventory managers now receive timely reports for efficient re-ordering and stocking. Sales and branch managers receive regular and consolidated sales reports. And Herwig and other top-level executives can view true operational costs and profit margins on 3000 products daily. “We can pull together new comprehensive sales views in just a couple of hours – as opposed to 40 hours before,” he says.

Intelligently gathering and dispersing information

Another key component to the new platform – ERT Group’s emPower™ Business Intelligence (BI) solution. It quickly transforms mountains of ordinary data into significant information that managers can use to make high-quality, informed business decisions.

For instance, ERT Group’s emPower software helps Florida Silica keep pace with fluctuating product pricing in the industry – a major challenge to the company. Because the old system couldn’t track those changes, sales people made manual overrides on pricing to stay competitive. The BI solution tracks fluctuations and quickly updates pricing system-wide. That alone saved the company well over $50,000 in manual price adjustments in the first year.

“ERT Group has given us the tools to make smart decisions based on timely information and real-time reporting, and that’s critical in today’s changing market. We now feel we have the intelligence and reporting to go up against anybody,” Herwig says.

About ERT Group

ERT Group is a Microsoft Gold Certified Partner and provides innovative and cost-effective business technology solutions to companies determined to gain and maintain competitive operating advantages. The company’s goal is to help businesses simplify processes, boost efficiency, increase profitability and establish a solid foundation for long-term success.