

STAHL SPECIALTY COMPANY

Top US Foundry Forges Glovia Partnership

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Founded in 1946 by Glen Stahl, Stahl Specialty Company manufactures aluminum castings, which it supplies to customers throughout the world.

The company has two factories in Missouri covering around 500,000 square feet, and it has about 1000 employees. Stahl is recognized in the industry as the leader in the tilt/pour process and its principal customers are household names such as General Motors, Chrysler, John Deere, Caterpillar, Marley and Bosch. In 2000, the company merged with Waupaca Foundry - a leading ductile and gray iron foundry with five plants in the US. This joint operation has enabled the company to diversify into other areas of metal casting and to broaden its customer base.

Islands of information

Over the years, Stahl's IT team had developed numerous programs to meet the information needs of different departments. **“As a result, we had a lot of information,”** says Jack Moore, the President of Stahl Specialty. **“But it was all disconnected. If we wanted to generate a business report, it took a tremendous amount of effort to put this disconnected information back together. We had to get rid of these islands of information and I challenged our people to do that.”**

Stahl's IS manager, Ken McAninch, is one of those responsible for formulating and implementing IT strategy. **“We knew we wanted to feed information into a centralized database, so we put the various options to the MIS steering committee. This committee is a group of senior managers that help determine our IT direction. This is a very**

good approach because we get top down commitment.

It's made it very easy to implement all of the systems we have in place.”

The committee spent a long time evaluating different packages before selecting Glovia. They were looking for a totally integrated system that would help them to manage their inventory and support all their management, procurement and accounting functions. Overall, they concluded that Glovia was the system best suited to their type of business. It was flexible enough to accommodate growth and a changing business model, yet Stahl could implement it without making fundamental changes to its processes or procedures.

Better management

Stahl has now been using Glovia's ERP product, glovia.com, for around two years and it is already feeling the benefit of having all of its information on a single database. **“It takes time to train a thousand people,”** says Moore. **“But they soon become motivated when they see the type and level of information they can get out of the system. Much of this information simply wasn't available twelve or even six months ago, so we've given managers the tools they need to manage their departments better. And we now have a complete and accurate breakdown of our production costs.”** Stahl uses Cognos in conjunction with glovia.com for extracting information, for providing snapshots of data online and for report writing. It's so easy to create reports, Moore estimates there are between three hundred and four hundred active ones at present. **“We're now looking at ways to consolidate them!”**

Operational views

Jean Thomason, a cost accountant and system specialist with Stahl, uses glovia.com every day of her working life, to verify the previous day's transactions. ***"Because it's a fully integrated system with manufacturing, purchasing, accounts receivable, payable and the general ledger, it's enabled us to close our books much more quickly than before."***

Thomason uses Cognos in conjunction with glovia.com to make projections of cash inflow and outflow. ***"Some of this was guesswork before,"*** she says. ***"Now we have good, hard numbers to go on. It's greatly improved our forecasting."***

Rick Fizer is Stahl's master scheduler. ***"We primarily selected Glovia for the manufacturing modules,"*** he says. ***"But what interests me right now is the APS (Advanced Planning System) module. APS is going to do planning from top down for me. It's going to take the customers orders, analyze the material requirements and tell me whether I have the capacity to do the job. All in one shot."***

Planning for growth

Stahl's Glovia system runs on an HP K450. ***"We felt the Unix platform was the most stable and most reliable for our scale of business,"*** says McAninch, who has managed two upgrades in the past two years without any major incidents. ***"You always have some minor problems,"*** he says. ***"but we had nothing that stopped production or curtailed our business activities."***

The Glovia system has been down just twice in the past year - and both of these were planned events. One was for the Year 2000 rollover and the other was to facilitate the addition of disk space. ***"We've sized our server so that we have no problem with response times. I believe this is where a lot of companies go wrong. You should get a box you feel is big enough now, and will handle your growth. When we first put our system in we bought a server that was highly expandable. So we haven't changed our core system. We've just added more to it and it's been growing with us ever since. We can just keep growing with it as we grow with Glovia."***

E-commerce

At present Moore feels ambivalent about e-commerce. He recognizes that it's not something he can ignore; yet he's unsure how it would work within Stahl.

"We've been using EDI for about two years and interfacing that with glovia.com. So that's a form of e-commerce, obviously, and that's been driven by our customers."

McAninch is also cautious because the products and the market are in their infancy. ***"Certainly we'll plan to go that way but we want to see how the industry standardizes before we jump in. We also need to look closely at the modules Glovia has to offer and determine where we want to go."***

Growth opportunities

Looking back at the decision to implement Glovia, Stahl's President, Jack Moore, says, ***"We're still learning. glovia.com offers a tremendous amount of information to our managers and we're confident that we made the right decision."***

"Glovia has always helped us with any kind of problem we've had," acknowledges McAninch. ***"They have been aware of when we're doing an upgrade and have always been on the line ready to help us. I think we've developed a good rapport with the people in that area. They do an excellent job."***

He is also enthusiastic about Glovia's special interest groups, maintaining constant communication with them is essential in order to make the best use of glovia.com. ***"The groups meet on a regular basis, discussing any issues or any future enhancements we would like to see - or things we want to do with the system. You need to be as involved as you can, and you need to be proactive."***

"As our company grows, we'll find more uses for glovia.com. It's not a question of installing it and it's done. It's a constantly evolving process. As our company expands, so will our use of glovia.com. This will be just one more chapter in our book of success with Glovia."

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