



Suitcase Industry Leader Gets Well Prepared for Growth

Lawson M3 made it possible for Bric's to tackle a very competitive market, thanks to features not previously available that allowed the company to improve the management of some internal processes.

Business Benefits

"With Lawson M3 we don't just have a single integrated system that monitors all the internal processes," Giovanni Briccola says enthusiastically. "Thanks to its extensive set of features, we were able to manage some changes in the market as well as growth in sales over the past few years. Recently, Bric's has grown a lot and is become more complex. The market is also more complex and fragmented now than it was before, which results in the operators having to fill fifty thousand orders a year for two thousand clients, with multiple deliveries."

"Lawson M3 is a versatile application that has provided useful information systems support. Thanks to the multi-warehouse logic, for example, we were able to combine three large platforms, which was required by the increased manufacturing volume. And in some other cases it even fostered the growth of the company as a whole by providing improvements that were not available previously, such as control of the lines of credit, payment reminders and return authorizations. In general, for us today it is a guarantee and an advantage to be able to use a stable solution like Lawson M3, and to connect it to specific applications that control some of the company's functions, such as the store management or the quality manual and procedures."

Compared to the previous information system, Lawson M3 has proved to be user-friendly and it makes a much larger amount of information available both to management and to the operators.

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The application's international features have also enabled the company to convert to the Euro. When the company will feel that the time is right, Lawson M3 will help Bric's integrate the foreign branch offices completely into the system.

The Company

Bric's is a company in the Como region of Northern Italy. For over fifty years, Bric's has been creating purses and suitcases made of leather and other materials, for both Italian and foreign markets. The company was founded in 1952 by Mario Briccola in Olgiate Comasco, and in the 1980s his sons entered the business.

This led to the first reorganization of the manufacturing processes and of the sales network, with an introduction of new information systems and a move into foreign markets. The new generation started a process of change that continued throughout the 1990s with important partnerships with Kipling, Tumi and The Sak. Branch offices in foreign countries, especially in Germany, France and Great Britain, were opened, as well as the "Bric's Store" chain of retail stores at the end of the decade.

Today, the company has annual sales of EUR 30 million, as well as six branch offices (with a warehouse for each branch) of which three are in Italy and three abroad. It has 2,000 customers, handles 50,000 orders a year and manages a dozen Bric's Stores in Milan and Catania that are owned by the company or by affiliates. Additional stores are scheduled to open soon in Paris, London and Düsseldorf. Eighty percent of the company's products are distributed in Italy and Europe, with the remaining 20 percent in the United States and in Asia. The short-term goal is to increase sales in the American market.

In 2000, Bric's became the first company in the industry to be awarded UNI EN ISO 9001 quality certification.

Why Lawson?

In 1998, Bric's was still using an information system that was not tailored to the industry. The company was able to use the system to manage the day-to-day operations (such as loading/unloading of goods at the warehouse, invoicing, receiving orders), but not to perform strategic planning of its resources. "With the homemade tools we had," Giorgio Rusconi, Manager of Information Systems explains, "We were able to manage forecasting and procurement of materials but not to develop demand over time. Monitoring demand trends over the long term required a more elaborate and integrated system—such as an MRP2 system, for example—which is the solution we turned to in the end."

The software used by Bric's was also rather unstable because it was the result of a number of adjustments—characteristics of a system that was too limited for the growing needs of the company. For effective IT management of the manufacturing processes, Bric's needed instead a more complete, reliable and stable system and—if possible—one with an international orientation that



“Lawson M3 enables us to handle multiple companies with an effective management of all the intercompany flows.”

Giorgio Rusconi, Manager of Information Systems, Bric's

could help with further business development.

Finally, Bric's needed an integrated system that could create a flow of information among the various parts of the company, encouraging internal communication and generating useful synergies such as the one between the planning office and the sales and marketing organization.

“We spent the first few months of 1998 evaluating the best software for our needs, and in the end we chose Lawson M3 because it was a complete system with advanced features, because of Lawson focus on the fashion market, because of the international characteristics of the application and because the implementation costs were reasonably easy to determine, unlike other competing solutions.

“Lawson M3 enabled us to integrate all the company's functional areas, including accounting which was excluded in other packages. The management system structure was solid, and multiple users can work at the same time without any problems, without the risk of losing the work already completed, and with a relative user-friendliness. We also found that planning management, which was the most critical aspect for us, was convincing. Finally, we thought that the presentation of the product in the demo version was clear and well-structured,” Giorgio Rusconi says.

The Implementation

The four-month project ran from September to December 1998, while the following January was used to partner the new users with those key users that had been involved the most in all the implementation phases of the project. The following five months were used to fine-tune the specific procedures. “We needed to be strongly motivated, determined and with a significant willpower,” Giovanni Briccola explains, “To implement the project in such a short time, but we couldn't have done otherwise anyway.”

“Our company is very focused on operation and we could not keep the resources ‘distracted’ from their daily tasks any longer. We also wanted to be ready at the beginning of 1999 to avoid overlaps between the project and the introduction of the euro currency. I have to say that in spite of the tight schedule, MRP was already working in January!”

The choice of adding younger resources to the project proved to be successful for the company. We had some new graduates in computer science participate in the project, Briccola continues, “And we were very pleased with this choice and with the experience as a whole. While they followed the implementation of the project, the young trainees prepared conscientiously, were enthusiastic, speedy and flexible. With their approach, they were a significant part of managing the change.”

Bric's uses the complete Lawson M3 Fashion solution, an industry-specific continuously evolving product developed by Lawson for this sector. The goal is to support in a very targeted way the companies that are active in the various parts of the fashion world, a sector that requires accelerating forecasting as well as handling of a wide variety of products. “Thanks to very flexible partitioning models,” Briccola says, “The Fashion version of Lawson M3 enables us forecast at any level, down to the individual article. And that's not all. Thanks to the use of a matrix to combine model/color/size, it offers a great

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flexibility for entering orders, for querying on-hand stock levels, and for managing purchasing, to name just a few examples."

Future Plans

Bric's goal is to make the best of the powerful features Lawson M3 offers, such as the Supply Chain Management component group that helps optimize the entire manufacturing cycle, increasing speed and reducing cost and waste.

"Today the system covers all the operational areas," Giorgio Rusconi says in closing, "But in 2002 we want to consolidate and analyze the data, so that they can be used by upper management. What really interests us is an increasingly virtual image of the company, and data processing that can support the company's strategy. In the next step, we plan to extend the system to the outside, to include agents, clients, branches, and suppliers."

About the Solution

Lawson M3 Fashion supports the following processes: administration, management control, logistics, sales, purchasing, and manufacturing.

Platform: AS/400 running OS/400 and DB2/400

About Bric's

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