KIE SUPPLY USES ERP TECHNOLOGY TO PREPARE FOR FUTURE GROWTH

"As a business owner, it's incredibly important to me that anyone can jump in and do a job. Therefore, the tools we use everyday to run our business must be powerful, but also intuitive. We definitely got that with DDI's Inform." ~ Amelia Kittson, Marketing Director & ERP Transition Lead

CLIENT SUCCESS STORY

For more than 60 years, KIE Supply has been dedicated to helping customers succeed in all of their irrigation, plumbing, electrical, and lighting projects. Their mission to operate under honest business practices and provide what customers need, when they need it, has driven company success since 1955.

Company Facts:

- Location: Kennewick, WA
- Industries: PHCP, Irrigation, Lighting & Electrical
- Previous Provider: Custom
- Website: kiesupply.com
- Buying Groups & Associations: ALA, ASA, LPG, IMARK Plumbing & Electrical

Features Highlighted:

- Advanced Report Writer
- User-Friendly Interface
- Paperless Workflows
- Seamless Transition

Benefits Gained:

- Smooth transition
- Added space
- Cross trained teams
- Streamlined processes
- Dependable support

When Amelia Kittson, KIE Supply's Marketing Director & ERP System Transition Lead began a search for a new ERP, DDI System's Inform ERP Software was recommended by Buying Group members and business contacts. Kittson's vision of where she wanted KIE to go in the future meant they needed to move away from their home-grown ERP system. In addition, KIE could no longer rely on one person to handle everything to do with their technology. "We were our own support system, we had an internal programmer, and he was doing everything for us, which, as you can imagine, is kind of an unreliable long-term position to put yourself in," explains Kittson. To begin the search for a new technology partner, Kittson turned to colleagues throughout the industry to see Inform in action.

"We were introduced to several similar businesses running on Inform, who gave us a real-life view of how the system operates during on-site visits. Ultimately, we decided that DDI was the right fit for KIE," says Kittson.

Once Kittson and her team saw the features of the system, she expected it would come with a hefty price tag. "We expected to have to spend millions of dollars and be 'nickeled and dimed' for everything. But that was not the case at all with DDI. We got the benefit of a very accessible company that gave us a 'local' feel with the industry expertise a business like ours required. We liked that Inform was a universal system and used terminology everyone

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in our company could understand. We didn't have to learn a whole new language to run our business," added Kittson.

Giving Employees the Tools they Need

Transitioning to a new software solution also allowed Kittson to reach out to KIE team members and staff to learn what mattered most to them with a new technology partner. "I sent out a survey to all of our employees and compiled a 9-page report on the critical components the team needed to do their jobs effectively now and for the future," says Kittson. "For me, one critical component was not putting all of our eggs in one basket. I was looking for something that I could have multiple people trained in to do each position so that we could cross train and better cover ourselves." Kittson wanted to avoid the gaps that can occur when someone is away on vacation or if a salesperson had to jump in to help purchasing. She also wanted to ensure future hires would adapt to the technology and not be turned off by a lack of functionality they had grown accustomed to in Generation X. "Because the Inform screens are intuitive, updated and the workflows make sense, we easily avoided those pitfalls," says Kittson.

Improvements Recognized in Just 6 Months

KIE supports four separate verticals with specific product lines, making the distributor unique in the fact that they theoretically require four distinct workflows. In the 6 months following KIE's "go-live" with Inform, they experienced a positive impact of powerful features and industry specific workflows. "We've made HUGE strides towards our goal of going paperless. We've eliminated file cabinets, gained space and our staff no longer has to dig through boxes of closed files. We no longer have to keep hard copies of every single invoice and we can view electronic signatures for all our orders using electronic signature capture. Our Sales Manager has been waiting 20 years for something like that, and it just was not something we had the ability to do in our legacy system," says Kittson.

KIE has also realized the time savings in completing transfers more efficiently and quickly than ever before. "Our purchasing clerk used to spend 45 minutes every morning doing sorting reports, daily reports, and then passing them out to various in baskets. On top of that, he would spend about three and a half hours cutting transfers. Now, all those reports are automated through Inform's Advanced Report Writer (ARW) and the simplicity of the process has saved tons of time."

A Seamless 'Flip of the Switch'

DDI's expert team of trainers and implementation specialists were on hand when the supplier went live with Inform in 2019 "Our "go-live" went really well. We had four people from DDI on-site and our managers were ready to go. There was a real 'let's do this' attitude," describes Kittson. "We were expecting bombs to go off," Kittson joked. "Instead, we turned off the old system, and turned on the new one pretty seamlessly."

DDI's 26-year history serves as a testament to their commitment to suppliers like KIE. DDI prides itself on their 100% U.S. based development, implementation and support teams. Coupled with Inform's superior blend of rich features, Kittson believes Inform will strengthen purchasing and warehouse practices, provide even better service to customers, and offer the mobile technology needed to elevate performance across the board at KIE.

"The number one thing everyone required was a system that would be easy to cross train different team members on. As a business owner, it's incredibly important to me that anyone can jump in and do a job. Therefore, the tools we use everyday to run our business must be powerful, but also intuitive. We definitely got that with DDI's Inform," says Kittson.

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