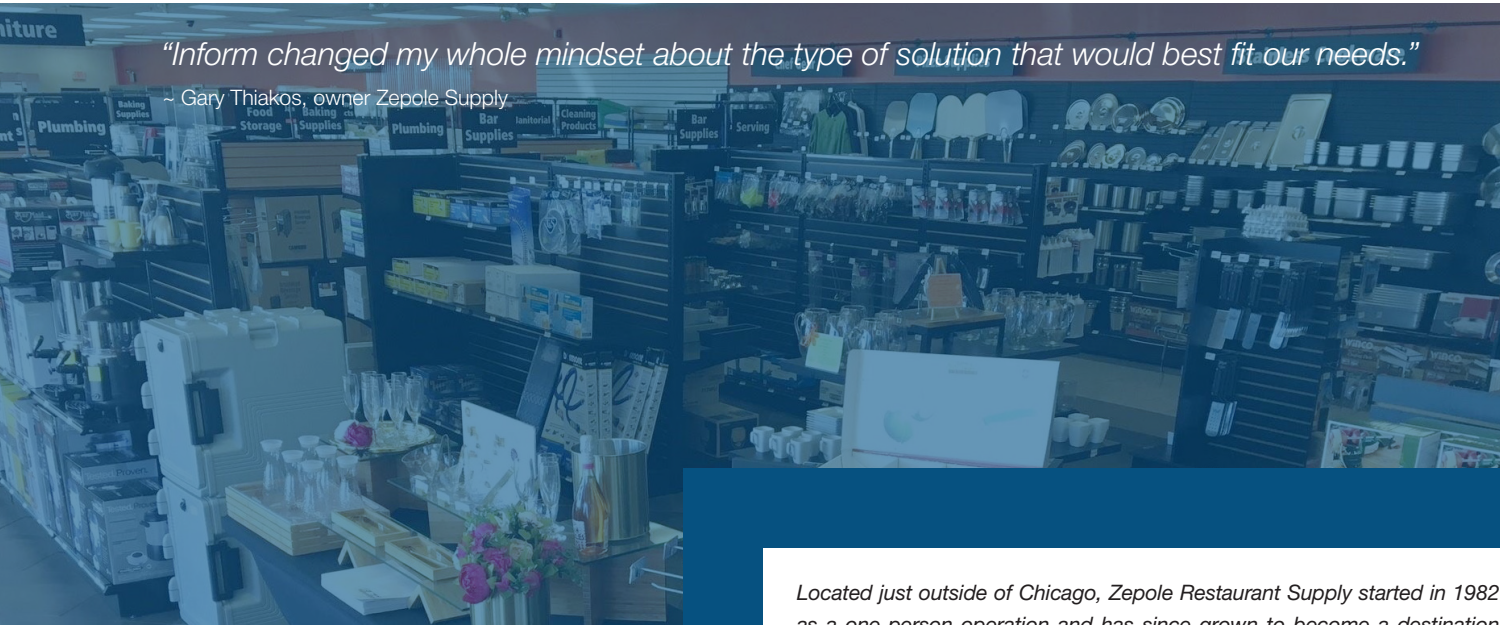# ZEPOLE RESTAURANT SUPPLY FUELS BUSINESS GROWTH AND ATTRACTS TOP TALENT WITH INFORM ERP SOFTWARE

"Inform changed my whole mindset about the type of solution that would best fit our needs."
~ Gary Thiakos, owner Zepole Supply

CLIENT SUCCESS STORY

Company Facts:

- Location: Bolingbrook, IL
- Industry: Restaurant Supply
- Previous Provider: Sage
- Website: zepole.com
- Buying Groups: FEDA, PRIDE, The United Group

Features Highlighted:

- Embedded CRM
- AutoQuotes Integration
- Dedicated Support
- Inform eCommerce

Benefits Gained:

- Increased revenue
- Expanded audience reach
- Improved morale
- Talent recruitment appeal

Located just outside of Chicago, Zepole Restaurant Supply started in 1982 as a one-person operation and has since grown to become a destination for foodservice operators throughout the entire Chicagoland area. Looking to further increase its reach both locally and online, Zepole implemented DDI System's Inform ERP Software and Inform eCommerce products. Finding that it blended seamlessly with its AutoQuotes software, Zepole has already seen significant business improvements and sales growth since the implementation, and feels well positioned for future growth.

When Zepole Restaurant Supply first opened its doors, it supplied disposable paper products to local restaurants. Now it provides everything from heavy equipment to small wares, disposables, janitorial and chemical supplies to foodservice operations throughout the greater Chicagoland area. In addition, the business touts an 8,000 square foot cash-and-carry store, which provides commercial-grade kitchen tools to both restaurant operators and consumers.

Reputation & Technology Win

After using the same software solution for almost two decades, Gary Thiakos, owner of Zepole Supply, knew he needed to make a change if he wanted his business to continue growing in an increasingly technology and data-driven marketplace. He wanted a solution that would provide him with a finer level of detail about the business, while also providing intelligent and intuitive forecasting. Seamless integration with its AutoQuotes technology was another required feature.

"We had been with Sage since 2002. But, there were limitations we could not overcome as we developed our path forward for where we needed

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Zepole to go in the future," sais Thiakos. "It was time to take the next step to evolve our Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) Software."

Hearing about DDI System through other satisfied users in The United Group (TUG) and PRIDE buying groups, Thiakos began exploring Inform. Despite his initial inclination toward open-source software systems, he found that DDI's products met approximately 95 percent of their predetermined requirements in a software solution.

"With Inform, we didn't have to write any additional code or workflows," he said. "This told me that 1) DDI knows the distribution business, and that 2) we were on the right track. Inform changed my whole mindset about the type of solution that would best fit our needs."

Stellar Support Through Transition

Once Zepole made the decision to update its current ERP software to Inform, DDI provided the management team with a clear set of steps to help prepare for the transition. In addition, Zepole employees received hands-on training and additional phone support to ensure that everyone had a thorough understanding of functions within the software. "We had a dedicated staff ready for the change," said Thiakos. "The implementation of Inform was a smooth process."

When support was needed, Zepole's team found DDI's expert Customer Support team to be extremely knowledgeable, quickly resolving any questions or issues. That dedicated support started during the implementation and continues through today.

"The support is a great selling point for DDI," said Thiakos. "Everyone is in the U.S. and staff are experts in specific areas. For example, accounting training is done by someone dedicated to accounting. DDI is committed to putting the right people in the right departments."

Transformation for the Future

The AutoQuotes integration coupled with eCommerce capabilities have allowed Zepole to quickly evolve their business. In addition, superior analytics and forecasting abilities are just beginning to scratch the surface of operational improvements.

> "Prior to Inform eCommerce, we hadn't even considered what was possible [on the web]... it's another incredible feature DDI brings to the table."

"From the purchasing end, we've already seen dramatic results," said Thiakos. "The forecasting is what is touted, and DDI has lived up to their reputation as having incredible capability in this area. I feel like we can dig even deeper into Inform and make it work even better for us. There are a lot of features we are not fully using yet, but will as we master some of the existing features."

On the eCommerce side of the business, Inform has enabled Zepole to enhance their online users' experience. "Prior to Inform eCommerce, we hadn't even considered what was possible—like pictures, details, accessories and substitutes," said Thiakos. "Now we have processes in place to continually update pictures, and we're always thinking about what the customer sees. It's another incredible feature DDI brings to the table."

Similarly, Inform has given Zepole a reliable CRM tool that Thiakos says is critical for recruiting younger talent and paving the way for future sales growth. "We're rolling CRM tools out with inside sales team and just starting to show our outside sales force what it can do. Even though we're just getting started, they're already seeing results."

Adding new technology, like DDI System's Inform, not only helps improve the sales process and enables sales professionals to do their jobs better and more efficiently, it will enable Zepole to attract new talent. "Teams need the right information at the right time, and they'll tell you that flat out," added Thiakos. "I can't tell you how many times when we've interviewed for a sales management position and the interviewee would ask about our CRM system and the level of information they would have access to. They basically would tell us that they can't do the job we want them to do without the right tools. And DDI's Inform ERP provides that for our business—100 percent."

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