



# DRIFIRE: Consistently Doubling Annual Revenues



Implementation Partner



Quit

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### Company

DRIFIRE LLC

### Industry

Consumer products

### Products and Services

Flame-resistant clothing

### Web Site

www.drifire.com

### SAP® Solutions

SAP® Business One application

### Implementation Partner

Real Solutions of North America



Suppose you had a breakthrough technology with awesome potential and a company coming together to turn it into a business success. What would be one of the first things you'd do? Flame-retardant clothing supplier DRIFIRE LLC chose to put sound business software in place. "We went with the SAP Business One application," says Glenn Rhodes, IT manager with DRIFIRE. "It saw us through 100% revenue growth in each of its first two years, and there is no end in sight to where it will take us."

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# Building from innovation to business success

Like any successful young company, DRIFIRE began with a concept: Provide a line of clothing that is both flame-retardant and comfortable. Sell it at first for obvious purposes to the military and later for commercial applications that would soon emerge. DRIFIRE had a patent on the right blend of fibers in the right proportion to make it all possible. Funding followed, and soon the company was underway. The military business started immediately, which jump-started DRIFIRE's revenue stream for its first couple of years.

With recent budget cuts, the military market revenues are not rising as quickly, but now the firm's commercial markets are booming. Across the United

States, DRIFIRE clothing is protecting utility and electrical contractor personnel, law enforcement officers, fire fighters, and others. "Our revenues doubled in the last two years," reports Rhodes. "This year we are focusing especially on commercial applications because that is where we expect to see our revenue doubling. Given the current state of the economy, we are really proud of that."

Founded in Columbus, Georgia, DRIFIRE is currently in the midst of relocating to Chicago, Illinois. It outsources manufacturing and sells its products through a combination of field reps, electronic commerce, and in-house salespeople who use telephone and e-mail.

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# Getting ERP in place as soon as possible

From day one DRIFIRE knew it had an explosive business on its hands and that the only way to sustain it was to use enterprise resource planning (ERP). But it also knew that selecting and implementing the right platform would take some time. Therefore, to get operations started, the company deployed spreadsheet and word processing tools for all its business operations. “We had spreadsheets for just about every business purpose you can think of – sales orders, invoices, quotes, deliveries, finances, purchases, inventory, and more,” says Rhodes. “We were doing a heck of a lot of data

entry and other manual operations. Needless to say, our tools could barely talk with one another, and disparities were everywhere.”

“Somehow we got the business booted up despite our rudimentary tools,” Rhodes continues. “What kept our people going, I think, was that they knew our executives were moving as fast as possible toward the vision of replacing the spreadsheets with a comprehensive, integrated business solution to propel us into the future.”

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“It wasn’t just that the spreadsheets were slow and cumbersome. There are some things that are just plain hard to do at all in spreadsheets.”

Glenn Rhodes, IT Manager, DRIFIRE LLC

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# Satisfying a tough set of requirements

Although eager to put ERP in place, DRIFIRE's leaders cut no corners evaluating their options and planning the deployment. They knew they needed functionality to support financials, purchasing, sales, and inventory management. They had an e-commerce site set up, and they needed an ERP solution that could be readily integrated with it. Automated part numbering was important because DRIFIRE products come in many sizes and colors that need to be differentiated by specific SKUs. The sales department was using forms to make it easy to log orders of multiple SKUs, so automated form development was important as well. In all, it was a demanding set of needs.

DRIFIRE started with an extensive list of candidate vendors and one by one eliminated them from consideration, ultimately culling the list to two, SAP and Microsoft, and then to one. "SAP Business One has

it all," explains Rhodes. "The base package contains all the fundamental functionality we needed to run the business and grow it, and its third-party application library fulfills all our special needs with software that shares the same user interface. You can't tell whether you're using SAP Business One or a third-party app. It all looks like SAP Business One."

Knowing how impatient its people were for a better platform, DRIFIRE also appreciated how quickly the new suite could be implemented and how few resources the project would consume.

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"On top of everything SAP Business One offered, its cost was very competitive."

Glenn Rhodes, IT Manager, DRIFIRE LLC

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## Building excitement for the rollout

Another point in favor of SAP® Business One to DRIFIRE was the availability of a top-notch system integrator that specializes in the application, Real Solutions. Rhodes and his small team from DRIFIRE joined forces with Real Solutions to make sure the implementation went smoothly. “One of our executives’ brilliant moves was to appoint a dedicated resource, me, 100% to the implementation,” Rhodes lauds. “No matter how good your partners are, they need the insight into the way a company does business that only the company itself can provide.”

Rhodes also credits the fact that the team performed extensive testing and training using a test database prior to going live. “That made the difference between a shaky go-live and what we experienced – smooth operations from the get-go with very few user errors. Our people weren’t just prepared for SAP Business One – they were excited.”

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“We had an aggressive four-month schedule for implementing SAP Business One, but we made it. We stayed within budget too.”

Glenn Rhodes, IT Manager, DRIFIRE LLC

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# Fulfilling special needs with partner applications

DRIFIRE's people now enjoy the smooth, automated business process flow they were hoping for. The e-commerce channel is vibrant as a result of its integration with SAP Business One via a third-party application that DRIFIRE deployed, iBOLT from Magic Software. iBOLT also connects in a new portal that DRIFIRE implemented so that its reps can review sales orders online.

Another third-party application, Matrix One from Navigator Business Systems, takes the work out of creating part numbers that are used to denote an item's size and color. "We do hundreds of combinations at a time, so the automation is a huge time-saver," says Rhodes. Yet another partner application, the B1 Usability Package from Boyum IT, helps

prepare the forms that DRIFIRE uses in creating sales orders.

Recently DRIFIRE had occasion to use the services of I-Business Network, which provides SAP Business One on a hosted basis. "We were getting ready for our move to Chicago, and we knew it would be important to have access to SAP Business One both there and here in Columbus," explains Rhodes. "We also wanted our people to be able to use it from home or wherever they might be – one of the big advantages of a hosted solution. Moving to the cloud also saved us a lot on relocating hardware and staffing required to maintain the infrastructure. Besides, I-Business Network has better disaster recovery than we could have afforded."

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"Before we moved SAP Business One into the cloud, I was concerned about performance; but the impact has been minimal. Often you don't see any difference at all."

Glenn Rhodes, IT Manager, DRIFIRE LLC



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## Helping the business at every level

Gone is all the redundant, manual data entry that DRIFIRE endured during its spreadsheet days. Inventory turns and costs are available in real time at the click of a button. SAP Business One serves up all the information that internal and field sales reps need to maximize the value of every sales call. They can create quotes on the spot and e-mail them quickly and easily to the customer.

DRIFIRE's executives have access to real-time reports containing all the top-level information about how the business is doing, which empowers them to make decisions that keep it growing. "We could never have grown like this without SAP Business One," says Rhodes. "With spreadsheets, the data entry alone

would have killed us, not to mention all the delays in getting vitally needed information into management's hands. So instead of allowing the business potential of our novel technology to stagnate, we've experienced a succession of 100%+ growth years in the midst of a pretty horrible economy. We consider that quite an accomplishment."



# 100%+

Year-over-year growth  
the last two years



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## Taking advantage of new functionality

DRIFIRE recently upgraded to the latest version of SAP Business One to take advantage of its many enhancements. “We carefully planned the upgrade together with Real Solutions and did multiple overview training sessions on the new functionality,” says Rhodes. “We wanted all the new functionality in the latest release – in accounting, for example. We plan to phase in the new features gradually so that we can take full advantage of them. One task high on our list is to roll out the new management cockpit tools that provide key information that our executives need in dashboards. We are also excited about the new release’s support for mobile devices, which will let our reps access and enter data wherever they are via iPads, iPhones, or other portable devices.”

DRIFIRE is also planning a data warehouse for analyzing all its historical customer information. Yet another thrust will be to expand its use of the SAP Crystal Reports® software provided with SAP Business One. “We have used SAP Crystal Reports only enough to know that it is a really nice tool,” says Rhodes, “and we’re eager to get into it more deeply.”

As the business settles into its new Chicago home, DRIFIRE looks to a bright future. The firm continues to innovate, constantly introducing new products. “It is really nice to know that our business software is never going to stand in the way of achieving our full potential,” Rhodes concludes. “Quite the opposite – it is helping us get there.”

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“I have been involved in many ERP projects. SAP Business One is by far the easiest to implement and support. We are delighted with the choices we made.”

Glenn Rhodes, IT Manager, DRIFIRE LLC

