

Zeager Bros. – Innovating Across the Landscape with TRAVERSE

Zeager Bros., Inc. is the leader in producing environmentally-friendly landscape products for playgrounds, green roofs, and horse-training facilities. The company began in 1967 as a family-owned sawmill in Pennsylvania. “We had some byproducts from the milling operation which led us into producing landscaping mulch in the 1970s,” says Bob Zeager, current President of Zeager Bros. Way ahead of its time, the company built a reputation for environmentally friendly processes and products. “We were on the cutting edge of developing a decorative landscape mulch that was good for the plants and the soil,” says Zeager.



Throughout the 1970s and 1980s, playground manufacturers and horse trainers took an interest in their products, so Zeager Bros. took the lead in developing specialty products for their customers. “We got out of the lumber and logging business around 1990 to focus on the playground and landscape surfaces,” says Zeager. “Today, we’ve added several other types of surfaces, including drainage products for green roofs.”



With manufacturing and distribution locations in Pennsylvania and Kentucky, Zeager Bros. also contracts and ships products from lumber mills all over the United States. “We’ve delivered products to customers in all 50 states and each of the Canadian provinces,” says Zeager. “We have the ability to keep our quality consistent from location to location, especially when we have national accounts that are looking for consistent quality no matter where it comes from.”

Though their quality remained consistent, their experience with their business software was anything but. Zeager Bros. depended upon a mish-mash of unrelated software packages to handle their accounting, payroll, manufacturing, and distribution needs. The challenge of maintaining these systems began to drain more time and money.

Bringing systems together

Bob Zeager approached the software experts at Technology Solutions Associates LLC with clear software goals in mind. “We wanted to create some efficiencies between departments so we didn’t have to re-key or re-enter data moving from one software system to another,” says Zeager.

Zeager Bros. also spent a lot of time maintaining mission critical logistics software that wasn’t keeping up with modern technology. “We found the need to continually modify this program so that it would work well on the newer operating systems and servers,” says Zeager. “We got tired of footing the bill for that.”

A new software system would also need to help Zeager Bros. manage the distribution of products from approximately 50 different locations. “It’s important for us to make sure that we’re quoting

the best delivered price on each bid and each job that we pursue,” says Zeager. “We really have a complex distribution program in place where we have to figure out how to calculate numerous delivery fees, and it could come from numerous different locations.”

Jason Groff and his team at Technology Solutions Associates examined the Zeager Bros. challenges, and suggested TRAVERSE version 11 software from Open Systems, Inc. as the answer.

Departments joined under one reporting framework

TRAVERSE provided Zeager Bros. a single data source for all of their departments. “The ability to share information throughout each department has improved,” says Zeager. “We’ve allowed users to see what they need to see in each department, so that’s been helpful.”

Each department has information access tailored to their needs, which saves time by eliminating extra information and focusing on what each user needs most. “We really like the interactive views, and the ability to customize the data that we see for each different management function,” says Zeager. “There’s just numerous ways that we can report the information. We can look at performance by territory, we can look at performance by rep, or we can look at performance by product line or category or item, by the warehouse location it was shipped from... there are any number of ways that we can look at the information now. The ability to customize the reporting is certainly very helpful, but the ability to allow each user to see what they need to see is also a benefit, too.”

Customization brings integration without limits

Choosing TRAVERSE meant that headaches with third-party software integration became a thing of the past for Zeager Bros. With the coding help of Jason Groff, TRAVERSE is tied with the industry-specific software that Zeager Bros. requires. “I think the ability to customize TRAVERSE where needed is probably the number one thing that attracted us to TRAVERSE in the first place, and the number one thing that we’re most happy with now,” says Zeager. “The ability to have this custom logistics or shipping component along with it has certainly been a big plus for us. That’s something that was a barrier for us to using off-the-shelf software in the past.”

Experts ease the transition, create opportunities for efficiency

The process of transferring to a unified software solution from a loose group of disparate systems can be daunting. Fortunately, the experienced team at Technology Solutions was able to guide Zeager Bros. with the minimum amount of fuss. “It definitely was a time-consuming process, but I will say that it was made much better because of the planning we did with Technology Solutions,” says Zeager. “They had been through this before. They really helped us in planning ahead for this, and making sure we allotted sufficient time so that things were in place before we had our next busy season.”

Moving forward by keeping focus on innovation

Now that TRAVERSE version 11 is providing new efficiencies throughout every aspect of their business, Zeager Bros. can concentrate on what they do best; creating innovative ideas to serve their customers’ needs. “We’re continuing to expand upon both our recreational surfacing line and our landscape line,” says Zeager. “We’re doing some things with the wood fiber for recreational surfaces that nobody else is doing yet in terms of bonding it in place for trails, so we’re pretty excited about that.”



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